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# RELIGION

## CONTENTS

<i>Editorial</i>	1
<i>Jordan Paper</i>	
'Riding on a White Cloud'. Aesthetics as Religion in China	3
<i>Muhammad Afnán and William S. Hatcher</i>	
Western Islamic Scholarship and Bahá'í Origins	29
<i>Anantanand Rambachan</i>	
Is Karmayoga a Direct and Independent Means to Moksha? An Evaluation of Vivekananda's Arguments	53
<i>Eleanor Nesbitt</i>	
The Nānaksar Movement	67
<i>Paul Heelas</i>	
New Religious Movements in Perspective (Review Article)	81
<i>Short Reviews and Book Notes</i>	99
<i>Announcement</i>	101

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## RELIGION

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APRIL 1985

# RELIGION

3/20/85

3/20/85

## CONTENTS

*Purusottama Bilimoria*

The Ārya Samāj in Fiji. A moment in Hindu diaspora 103

*David A. Scott*

Ashokan missionary expansion of Buddhism among the Greeks  
(in N. W. India, Bactria and the Levant) 131

*Peter Masefield*

The Muni and the Moonies 143

*Paul Dundas*

Food and freedom. The Jaina sectarian debate on the nature of the Kevalin 161

*Announcement*

199

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JULY 1985

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## CONTENTS

### VICTOR TURNER COMMEMORATIVE NUMBER

#### JERUSALEM SEMINAR ON COMPARATIVE LIMINALITY

*Richard D. Hecht*

Comparative Liminality: Introduction to the Papers from the  
Jerusalem Seminar 201

*Victor Turner*

Liminality, Kabbalah, and the Media 205

*Uri Almagor*

Long Time and Short Time:  
Ritual and Non-ritual Liminality in an East-African Age System 219

*Steven Kaplan*

The Ethiopian Holy Man as Outsider and Angel 235

*Ilana Friedrich Silber*

'Opting Out' in Theravada Buddhism and Medieval Christianity:  
A Comparative Study of Monasticism as Alternative Structure 251

*Michael Heyd*

The Reaction to Enthusiasm in the 17th Century: From  
Antistructure to Structure 279

*Erik Cohen*

Tourism as Play 291

*Elihu Katz and Daniel Dayan*

Media Events: On the Experience of Not Being There 305

*S. N. Eisenstadt*

Comparative Liminality: Liminality and Dynamics of Civilization 315

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OCTOBER 1985

# RELIGION

200

## CONTENTS

*Winston Davis*

The Cross and the Cogel: The Ordeals of a Japanese Church 339

*Emefie Ikenga-Metuh*

The Paradox of Transcendence and Immanence of God in African Religions:  
A Socio-historical Explanation 373

*Martin S. Jaffee*

Oral Torah in Theory and Practice: Aspects of Mishnah-Exegesis in the  
Palestinian Talmud 387

*Short Reviews and Book Notes*

411

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## EDITORIAL

'Events have taken Religious studies by surprise', writes Mary Douglas.<sup>1</sup> She complains that students of the discipline did not foresee the resurgence of Islam, nor the return to social and political prominence of fundamentalism in the USA. Religious studies were caught out, she suggests, 'because of the rigid structure of their assumptions'. Three assumptions she particularly singles out for criticism: the belief that religion is beneficial, that modern people are essentially different from previous generations, and the acceptance of a view of culture as autonomous. Professor Douglas offers grounds for questioning each of these assumptions. Such a forthright critique is of great service in forcing us to re-examine our academic prejudices and to take more seriously aspects of religion which have sometimes seemed peripheral and ephemeral, but acceptance of some of Douglas' strictures does not mean accepting all of them.

Almost twenty years ago, the relatively young academic discipline of Sociology was similarly criticized for its failure to predict the revolt in the USA of the cities, blacks, women, and youth. But can it be said that the consequent emergence of the committed sociologist has resulted in the opening up of significant intellectual insights? Moreover is it the role of the academic to forecast the future as opposed to explaining patterns and interpreting trends? Perhaps not, but it is reasonable to expect that his or her intellectual assumptions will not be so narrowly prescribed that new ideas and movements cannot be accounted for.

*Religion* is not the organ of any particular school and its pages are open to academic treatments of all aspects of religious life, thought, and behaviour, including reflection on the methods and stance of the variety of disciplines which are used to interpret the data. We are particularly anxious to encourage debate between scholars, and invite short comments on the work which appears in our pages. This is particularly a time for discussion of the issues raised by Mary Douglas, and we hope that amongst our readers, there will be those who feel moved to make a contribution.

STUART MEWS

<sup>1</sup> M. Douglas, 'The Effects of Modernization on Religious Change', *Daedalus* 111 (1982) p1.



## EDITORIAL NOTICES

### CORRESPONDENCE

'Correspondence' is a new section of the journal intended to facilitate dialogue amongst scholars and to enliven academic discussion and debate. *Religion* encourages critical response to and scholarly comment on articles and reviews that have appeared in recent issues of the journal. This section will also publish brief research notes of interest, announcements of projects, research in progress, research enquiries and letters to the editors. All contributions will be examined by the editors in keeping with the general editorial policy of the journal.



*Religion* (1985) 15, 3-27

## **'RIDING ON A WHITE CLOUD'**

### **AESTHETICS AS RELIGION IN CHINA**

**Jordan Paper**

Due to a combination of unique factors in the development of Western Christianity, there arose a distinction between religious and secular rituals, mythology and, especially, institutions. The assumption that this situation is a cultural universal has often led to an inability to understand other cultures from their own frames of reference and, accordingly, to an inability to make meaningful cross-cultural comparisons in regard to religion. In particular, the focus on competing institutions has created a blindspot in perceiving differing, complementary modalities within a basic overall structure such as Chinese religion (emphasis on the singular). One such modality in Chinese culture is their most prestigious complex of art (poetry, calligraphy and painting) in itself.

The relationship of aesthetics and religion in China, in part, is no different from traditional civilizations—art serves as an adjunct to religion and morality. Music, as has often been pointed out,<sup>1</sup> was considered by Confucius and his followers to affect the emotions and, accordingly, should be controlled for the good of society.<sup>2</sup> As elsewhere, art served to decorate temples, enhance ritual, provide objects for worship, etc. It is in a further regard that I believe the relationship in China to be unique—that aesthetic activity itself became an alternative mode of religiosity for the traditional élite.

#### **AESTHETICS AND THE WEN-JEN**

Theoretically (and, more often than not, in practice) the traditional Chinese élite were males<sup>3</sup> who were highly accomplished in *wen*: the corpus of received literature, the creation of literature, writing as an art, clan and state rituals, etc.; i.e., all the constituents of being 'civilized' from the standpoint of the dominant social class.<sup>4</sup> The *wen-jen* (*wen*-person) or literati, the traditional élite, could be placed between two opposite ideals: *jen* and *tzu-jan*. *Jen* (etym.: man and two), usually translated 'benevolence', means the ultimate in social responsibility. *Jen* was the ideal of the *ju-chia* (usually



imprecisely translated as 'Confucianism' and *ju* alone as 'scholar'), the dominant ideology of state and clan religion combined as interpreted by Confucius and his followers.<sup>5</sup> *Tzu-jan* (lit.: 'of itself', 'spontaneity') expresses both the ideal of nature (as opposed to human artifice) and individuality or personal freedom. *Tzu-jan* is one of, if not the basic tenet of *tao-chia* (usually translated as 'taoism' but nonetheless distinct from the later *tao-chiao*—taoist religious institutions). A *wen-jen* could express his individuality<sup>6</sup> in many ways, including modes of living, but usually did so as a *wen-jen*, that is with his brush, the basic *wen* implement of poetry, calligraphy and painting. Where a *wen-jen* could be found between these two ideals depended on both circumstances and personal inclinations but rarely would be exclusively one or the other. I will illustrate the range with two contemporary examples, both of the last generations to reflect the traditional culture.

Mao Tse-tung, recently deceased, hardly requires an introduction. Although of peasant background, Mao received an education (against his father's will) that was basically the traditional one. Even when attending normal school (1913–18), he received training in classical prose, a skill which he continued to maintain.<sup>7</sup> Throughout his life, he practised calligraphy and wrote poetry in the classical style. Although it is unlikely he would use the term, he was a *wen-jen*. In inclination and occupation, he fully maintained the dominant élite ideal, service to others (*jen*): 'party' and 'people' merely replaced 'clan' and 'state' as objects of service. Among his published poems, one is exceptional in regard to the sentiments expressed. The following translation is overly literal in order to indicate the parallel structure of the middle lines:

Ascending Mount Lu<sup>8</sup>

Single mountain peak floats beside Great River;<sup>9</sup>  
Briskly ascend four hundred verdant switchbacks.  
Coldly look towards ocean, see world-  
Warm wind blowing rain from sky to river.  
Clouds hang over Nine Tributaries,<sup>10</sup> yellow crane hovers;<sup>11</sup>  
Waves descend towards Three Wu,<sup>12</sup> white mist rises.  
Magistrate T'ao not know what place gone-  
Perhaps at Peach Blossom Spring ploughing a field?

The poem is in the T'ang (7th to 10th centuries) eight-line regulated verse form, a highly structured poetic genre, little of which can be indicated in translation. In this genre, the poem is divided into two quatrains with the import of the entire poem in the last couplet. The first quatrain provides the setting; the second, the meaning. The fifth and sixth lines oppose rising to descending. The 'yellow crane' here has two closely related meanings, each well known through a number of poems, including those of China's most famous poet, Li Po (701–762). In one,<sup>13</sup> Li Po mentions a Yellow Crane



Tower by the Yangtze, a name derived from its primary meaning as a familiar of the *hsien* (usually translated 'immortal'), originally two words referring to a type of shaman and a (feathered?) mountain spirit, whose meanings became confused and came to refer to one who achieved any of the 'taoist' goals (mystic experience and/or longevity) while retaining its original connotation of shamanic ascent.<sup>14</sup> This sense of 'yellow crane' is found in another poem by Li Po.<sup>15</sup> In turn, Li Po's use of the term derives from the poetry of Juan Chi (210–63—see below). 'White mist' has been a variant of 'white cloud', a symbol of shamanic ascent, since it is first found in Chinese literature (4th century BCE).<sup>16</sup> From the time of the *Ch'u Tz'u* (see below), it has come to serve as a poetic (or visual in painting) metaphor for a euphoric state, ranging from the mystic experience to the simple ecstasy of freedom.<sup>17</sup> Although the two lines could be read somewhat differently, its meaning is certain when we realize that Pao Chao (421–465), one of China's most important medieval poets, wrote a poem with the same title which contains the following lines:

We will mount the road of feathered men  
And merge forever with smoke and mist.<sup>18</sup>

By using Pao Chao's title, Mao is referring to the older poem, especially the two lines on which he writes a variation.

'Magistrate T'ao' refers to the famous poet T'ao Ch'ien (Yüan-ming, 365–427), who is the traditional epitome of a taoist-inclined poet, an individual who rejects the dominant social ideals to live a life of wine, rusticity, nature and mystic experience.<sup>19</sup> The key word here is 'magistrate', because T'ao only held that position once for a brief period, and it is unusual to refer to him in that manner. He gave up the position and refused to hold others. 'Peach Blossom Spring' is the title of his well known allegory which describes the social ideal of the *Chuang-tzu* (in part, the earliest taoist text): an isolated egalitarian village where food, shelter and leisure time are in sufficiency but not excess.<sup>20</sup>

I have discussed the meaning of the poem in some detail because scholars have gone to great lengths to find exclusively political meaning in the poem.<sup>21</sup> The poem was written on 1 July 1959; Mao was sixty-five. He had to a degree retired, giving up (or forced to give up) chairmanship of the government half a year previously (while retaining chairmanship of the Party) following growing dissatisfaction with his 'Great Leap Forward'. In August, a plenum of the Central Committee was to be held at Mount Lu reversing many of his policies. Also, serious difficulties were brewing with the Soviets, leading to the rupture soon to follow. In his poem, Mao is expressing a longing for freedom; freedom from responsibility, from cares, from office, etc. He does so through the traditional mode, through a literary expression of



the taoist ideal. That is for Mao, taoism (as a set of *tao-chia* concepts, not a *tao-chiao* system of doctrines) meant an alternative to the dominant ideology.<sup>22</sup> This taoism was understood as an aesthetic sensibility expressed through poetry, painting, etc., as well as a mode of living (retirement).

Many further examples of the minimal pattern could be provided, one being Ssu-Ma Kuang (1009–86), twice prime minister and a major historian. When temporarily forced out of office by his political opponent, he built himself a complex garden and wrote an essay on it (a masterpiece of prose style) in which he rejected some confucian values and praised the taoist: 'My ears, eyes, lungs and bowels are all my own personal possessions—I utterly follow my will, am utterly unbounded in scope . . . what pleasure can be greater than this!'<sup>23</sup>

Near the opposite end of the scale and of a subsequent generation to Mao Tse-tung is a calligrapher and connoisseur now in his mid-fifties who is known only to a small circle of like-minded friends. (Respecting his privacy, I have omitted his name.) He is from an educated Honan farming family.<sup>24</sup> His grandfather had failed the first of the civil service examinations; his father maintained an interest in calligraphy and painting. Until draught and locusts reduced the family to poverty when his education became sporadic, he was sent to both a modern school as well as a traditional one. With the Japanese approaching while in secondary school, he joined the army. Following the war, he studied Chinese literature at a university for a short time before returning to the military, in part, for the opportunity to travel. Taking leave for an excursion to the newly liberated Taiwan, he found the entire Nationalist army soon following him. He retired in 1960 as a major in the quartermaster corps and quickly spent his terminal pay on books, inks and brushes. With no family, no money, no profession and only interested in calligraphy, painting, enjoying the company of friends and travelling in the mountains to collect unusual stones,<sup>25</sup> he opened a tiny shop to sell his library and meet like-minded persons. When the books were gone, he continued as a calligrapher and a seal artist (a type of calligraphy), collector of stones, and creator of tray landscapes (miniature gardens), making a modest living by buying and selling the odd piece of art or antique among his friends.<sup>26</sup>

In this case, a taoist mode of life—a life exclusively devoted to the enjoyment of nature, friends and artistic activity—is due entirely to circumstances. Cut off (he has not seen any member of his family since 1947) from the family cult, although he maintains a small shrine, and with little opportunity to serve the state, which he had expressed in his youth within the modern context of 'nationalism' and 'patriotism' by joining the army, he is that rare Chinese phenomenon, an individual.<sup>27</sup> Given a different world (I asked him what his plans were before the Japanese invasion), he would have



continued his education and become a college teacher, a *ju-chia* occupation. But although not a teacher or government official, he still considers himself a *wen-jen*; a *wen-jen* in retirement, expressing *wen* through aesthetic expressions.

This pattern is again not unique. It has been especially prevalent after the collapse of dynasties when *wen-jen* who could or would not serve the state lived as recluses (i.e., did not hold office)<sup>28</sup> and devoted themselves to poetry, painting, etc. A number of examples will be cited in the following section.

### HISTORY OF AESTHETIC EXPRESSIONS

For over a millenium, poetry, calligraphy and painting have been considered by the élite as the Three Incomparables (*san-chüeh*).<sup>29</sup> Together they comprise the traditional Chinese aesthetic activities. In the following, I will present a brief history of each, focusing on their relationship to religion.<sup>30</sup>

#### Poetry

The earliest extant Chinese poem (excluding the *Shih*)<sup>31</sup> is the 'Li Sao' by Ch'u Yüan (4th century BCE) in the *Ch'u Tz'u*.<sup>32</sup> It is a long description of a shamanic flight written by the author after he had retired or been dismissed from office. The poem both established a poetic style and provided a terminology (based on a past form of shamanism) for later poems (1st century BCE) also contained in the collection. Some of these poems,<sup>33</sup> written in a period when taoist thought had spread among the intelligentsia, emphasized the mystic experience:

When I looked, my startled eyes saw nothing;  
When I listened, no sound met my amazed ear.  
Transcending Inaction, I came to Purity,  
And entered the neighborhood of the Great Beginning.<sup>34</sup>

Other poems simply emphasized freedom, a concept that continued more than just the language of shamanistic experience:

Far and away my thoughts aspire,  
Enjoying the freedom of the floating clouds.<sup>35</sup>  
Just grant me my worthless body and let me go away,  
To set my wandering spirit soaring amidst the clouds.<sup>36</sup>

With the collapse, two centuries later, of the Han dynasty went the confucian synthesis as well. A failure of one reform movement by the *fang-shih* (court magicians) may have led to the formation of institutionalized taoism.<sup>37</sup> The confucians, many of whom were slaughtered by their opponents, the court eunuchs, moved first towards the earlier discredited Legalist (*fa-chia*) concepts and then towards *hsüan-hsüeh*,<sup>38</sup> all the while expressing their taoist inclinations in poetry.<sup>39</sup> These tendencies reached



their culmination in the third century, when we find the first maturing of Chinese poetry. The two greatest poets of the period were Ts'ao Chih (192–232), the son of Ts'ao Ts'ao (founder of the Wei dynasty, also a notable poet) and Juan Chi. The former was greatly interested in taoism, a taoism that by this time emphasized the gaining of longevity in order to join the company of flying *hsien*, and wrote poems on this theme. The latter not only turned pentameter verse into a major poetic mode, but his poems were highly influential on the great T'ang (7th to 9th century) poets.

Juan Chi is a fascinating figure from legend and history. From both standpoints, he is 'a forerunner of a new kind of hermit, a religious recluse.'<sup>40</sup> A military official caught in a complex political situation, much of his poetry is a carefully hidden commentary on his times. He is remembered, however, for his drinking<sup>41</sup> and is the first of the famed drinking, hence, unconventional and individualistic, poets. Juan is also remembered as a recluse oriented towards nature, again setting a legendary pattern: '... he would climb upon the heights to look down upon the mountains and rivers for days on end, forgetting to return home.'<sup>42</sup> Among many subjects, his poems refer to *hsien*.<sup>43</sup>

Let us ride on the clouds and summon Sung and Ch'ao<sup>44</sup>  
And breathe in and out forever!<sup>45</sup>

As well, Juan Chi's poems allude to the mystic experience:<sup>46</sup>

At last I am able to forget my difficulties:  
But will I know how silently to leave my self behind?<sup>47</sup>

Isn't it better to leave behind the things of this world  
And mount in brightness, swirling with the wind?<sup>48</sup>

It is generally accepted that the most important poets between the third century (some would say since Ch'u Yüan) and the T'ang period are T'ao Ch'ien and Hsieh Ling-yün (385–433)<sup>49</sup> Each became an archetype, both of poetic genres and of life-styles: T'ao, the epitome of the taoist, drunken recluse, was later exemplified in Li Po; and Hsieh, the buddho-taoist landscape poet, caught between official life and retirement, was later exemplified in Wang Wei (701–61). Li Po and Wang Wei together with Tu Fu (712–70) are the three great lights of Chinese poetry's 'Golden Age'.

We have little hard data for the life of T'ao Ch'ien. The traditional biographies are apocryphal and dwell on his legendary aspects. However, they do coincide with his autobiographical essay ('I have lived alone in my poor house, drinking wine and writing poetry')<sup>50</sup> and his poetry.<sup>51</sup> Rejecting office, the only source of wealth available to a member of his class, and lacking a large inheritance, he lived as a farmer.<sup>52</sup> T'ao took pleasure,



perhaps even focused his life, on drinking and writing poetry, and he came to represent for subsequent generations the alternative lifestyle to the dominant imperatives—to serve family, clan and state. His image is that of the semi-recluse having like-minded companions (T'ao was reputedly a friend of Hui-yüan—see below), living a simple life close to nature (interpreted in various ways). For T'ao, wine was perhaps not so much an escape from reality (it was certainly used as an excuse to avoid offers of government positions) but to another reality (altered state of consciousness) and poetry was the means of expressing it. Poem No. 5 of the series 'Twenty Poems after Drinking Wine' is often cited as a classic example of the mystic experience achieved through nature, expressed via poetry:<sup>53</sup>

I built my hut besides a traveled road  
 Yet hear no noise of passing carts and horses.  
 You would like to know how it is done?  
 With the mind detached, one's place becomes remote.  
 Picking chrysanthemums by the eastern hedge  
 I catch sight of the distant southern hills:  
 The mountain air is lovely as the sun sets  
 And flocks of flying birds return together.  
 In these things there is a fundamental truth  
 I would like to tell, but lack the words.<sup>54</sup>

For the life of Hsieh Ling-yün we have considerably more data.<sup>55</sup> Scion of one of the two most powerful families of medieval China, Hsieh's paternal great-uncle, Hsieh An (320–85), was a major statesman and a frequent companion of the foremost Chinese calligrapher, Wang Hsi-chih (321–78—see below). Hsieh's mother was the niece of Wang Hsien-chih (344–88—see below). As a child, Hsieh was temporarily adopted into the family of a follower of the Way of the Heavenly Master (*T'ien-shih-tao*), a major institutional taoist sect in which calligraphy was of considerable importance, who resided in the scenic are of Hangchow. His father died young and he inherited the title, vast estate and wealth of his grandfather, an important general.

As a young man, Hsieh visited the buddhist centre at Mount Lu (the same as the one referred to in the poems of Mao, T'ao, and Pao) that had been founded by an essential figure in the history of Chinese buddhism, Hui-yüan (334–416). He there joined a group of lay-followers that included the calligrapher and painter Tsung Ping (375–443—see below). Later in life, Hsieh was to write several important buddhist treatises, one of which presaged the later Southern ch'an (zen) focus on instantaneous enlightenment. Yet throughout his life, he maintained his family's interest in institutional taoism and the search for 'immortality'.

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important as head of a major branch of the Hsieh clan, Ling-yün was caught in a change of dynasties which severely compromised his sense of confucian loyalty. He accepted offices but retired several times, was twice exiled and finally executed.

As a poet, he considered himself the follower of Ts'ao Chih. Later generations considered him, not quite accurately, the founder of landscape poetry. 'Landscape' is the common translation for *shan-shui* (lit.: mountains and water), but *shan-shui* connotes more than our word implies. It arises from two sources: the combination of buddhism and taoism that took place in southern China in the fourth and fifth centuries, and the fabulous scenery of Hang-chow, Kuei-chow, etc., that was, as we shall see, to be the centre for major developments in painting as well.

Landscape was not just a *symbol* for the Tao—the term was in this period as much a Buddhist as a Taoist expression—it is the Tao itself. This is brought out very clearly by a passage in Sun Ch'o's [ca. 300–80, protégée of Wang Hsi-chih] 'Fu of My Wanderings on Mount T'ien T'ai':

When [the Tao] dissolves it becomes rivers; When it coagulates it becomes mountains.

So the contemplation of landscape is the contemplation of Reality itself.<sup>56</sup>

*Shan-shui* is a potent religious symbol because it represents the combination of masculine (mountains) and feminine (water) powers—the origin of creation being the split of the unitary Tao into Yin and Yang: feminine and masculine (in this usage) complementary opposites. Early Chinese nature sacrifices were made to particular mountains and bodies of water.

Hsieh did not just contemplate mountains, but hiked in them (he is reputed to have invented a climbing boot with reversible studs), an activity which Frodsham considers 'almost a devotional practise, bringing him into contact with the 'Body of the *Dharma*' itself.'<sup>57</sup> Certainly it was in the mountains and in their ascension that Hsieh achieved the experience expressed in his poem, 'I Follow the Chin-chu Torrent, Cross the Peak and Go Along by the River'. Following a description of an ascent of a mountain alongside a stream and allusions to the 'Li Sao' (common in his poetry), he concludes:

When I look at all this, the world of men disappears,  
In a flash of enlightenment everything falls from me.<sup>58</sup>

### *Calligraphy*

As with most early civilizations, writing was a characteristic of Shang culture (late 2nd millenium BCE). Less typical was a major use: the means for communicating with supernatural powers.<sup>59</sup> When in the late 1st millenium BCE, the warrior-priest clansmen who comprised the élite instead became



semi-military proto-bureaucrats, they remained ritual specialists. However, writing (*wen*) then took precedence over military skills (*wu*). With improvements in brush (known as early as the Shang period) and ink and the development of paper,<sup>60</sup> the style of writing became more fluid, allowing of many minor variations, hence, more personal. By the 1st century CE, examples of particular individuals' writings were collected, and by the late 2nd century, major pieces of calligraphy (engraved on stone) were signed. Mention of calligraphy at this time becomes more frequent in the histories and by the end of the Han dynasty, an individual (Chang Chih) is exclusively remembered as a calligrapher.<sup>61</sup> However, calligraphy as an aesthetic mode actually begins in the fourth century.

In the early fourth century, the brief unification of China under the Chin dynasty collapsed, and the north was conquered by non-Chinese. There was an exodus of the élite to the south of the Yangtze River, an area that had been considered a frontier, where different cultural traditions had been maintained throughout the Han dynasty. In the period following this exodus, we find further developments in institutional taoism and its development into a common factor of élite culture.<sup>62</sup> As well, we find the development of gentry buddhism, closely connected to taoism and the great families.<sup>63</sup>

It is a father and son of the second of the two most powerful families in the south during the medieval era whom Chinese tradition considers the progenitors of calligraphic aesthetics.<sup>64</sup> Both Wang Hsi-chih and his youngest son, Wang Hsien-chih, were followers of the 'Way of the Celestial Master.'<sup>65</sup> Institutional taoism reinforced the very early tradition of writing for communication with spirits and introduced aspects of calligraphic style as essential features of their sacred manuscripts and spiritual petitions.<sup>66</sup> The fourth century witnessed the development of Mao Shan taoism<sup>67</sup> and the use by its visionary founder, Yang Hsi (b. 330), of automatic writing (writing in trance).<sup>68</sup> Among the scripts used was *ts'ao shu* (a free, rapid, fluid style) which the Wangs preferred. Stylistic connections have been noted between Wang Hsien-chih and Yang Hsi,<sup>69</sup> and the former's calligraphy was later noted for its spontaneity.

The southern tradition of calligraphy was brought north with the unification of China under the Sui emperors (end of the 6th century) who were especially interested in calligraphy. The second emperor of the succeeding T'ang dynasty showed particular favour to the calligraphy of the two Wangs, which became established as the traditional standard.<sup>70</sup>

The Northern Sung dynasty (960-1126) which followed the chaos resulting from the collapse of the T'ang was in many ways a reverse of the expansionist, cosmopolitan spirit of the preceding era. In intellectual endeavours it was a period of a comprehensive search for the past, of the creation of encyclopedias, and, in the arts, of the development of connoisseur-



ship: not only the collecting and enjoying of archaeological artefacts, crafts of the past and present, rare books, and particularly calligraphy and painting of the past, but of grading and evaluating them and determining standards for the present. It was an activity in part due to the fact that the Northern Sung emperors did not maintain the Sui and T'ang concepts of all inclusive imperial collections, which, in turn, allowed the creation of private collections that were more accessible to the scholar/artists. The most influential of these connoisseurs, perhaps in his own time, certainly to future eras, was Mi Fu (1052-1107).

Through his critical works and in his own calligraphy, Mi Fu reinforced the tradition of basing the standard on the two Wangs. His 'theory of calligraphy is characterized by dialectical contrast: on the one hand, he emphasized an art-historical approach and thus fostered the intellectualization of calligraphy; on the other, he declared such unintellectual qualities as tranquility and naturalness to be the highest artistic values.'<sup>71</sup> Hence, calligraphy in which all the élite, the scholar-officials, were adept to some degree, could also serve as a complementary but opposite activity to those of the official realm—the spontaneity (*tsu-jan*) of taoist thought and, since the T'ang, ch'an buddhism,<sup>72</sup> as opposed to the ritual order (*li*) of official life:

In studying calligraphy one has to observe well the handling of the brush; that is to say, the brush has to be held with ease, and the palm should curve spontaneously. The movements should come swiftly with a natural perfection and emerge unintentionally.<sup>73</sup>

The influence of Mi Fu on calligraphy (and painting) was reinforced by the foremost theorists and practitioners of succeeding eras: Chao Meng-fu (1254-1322) of the Yüan dynasty and Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (1555-1636) of the Ming (see below).

### *Painting*

Poetry and calligraphy were the 'stock in trade' of the élite; only certain aspects of each furnished an alternative to official activity and concepts.<sup>74</sup> Painting became an important élite activity only considerably later and remained an avocation. Prior to the Yüan period (mid-13th to mid-14th centuries), painters were with few exceptions professionals who were considered craftsmen by the scholar-officials, even if they were of the Imperial Academy. Hence, they were not considered members of the élite's own, self-defined class. With the full development of the civil service system, class distinctions were based on success in literary examinations that were in turn based on *ju-chia* texts. However, during times in which it was unhealthy (despotic emperors), unnecessary (economic stability and/or excess of examination graduates) or unpopular (concepts of loyalty *in re* change of



dynasty) to hold office, it is not surprising that increasing numbers of élite, already experts with the brush, took up painting as an activity suitable to retirement. At least theoretically, they were amateur painters. The preferred subject was the landscape (*shan-shui*) (and the bamboo, which was treated as intermediary between calligraphy and painting).

Previously mentioned as an associate of Hsieh Ling-yün at the buddhist retreat on Mount Lu was Tsung Ping. Also a participant in intellectual circles, a noted calligrapher and author of buddhist treatises, he never held office.<sup>75</sup> He also painted. Although we are unaware as to what his paintings were like, we do have a prefatory essay to one of his paintings. In it he points out the religious aspect of landscape: 'Where the concern is with mountains (*shan*) and rivers (*shui*), [the fact is that,] while having the existent as their basic stuff, yet they tend towards the numinal realm.'<sup>76</sup> He writes that the action of painting can serve as an alternative to institutional taoism and confucianism (the allusion of 'the stone gate'): 'I was ashamed that, unable to concentrate my vital vapours and thus to give pleasure to my body, I was trampling on the traditions of the stone gate. Thereupon I drew images and spread colors [over them], forming this cloud-covered range.'<sup>77</sup>

Landscape poetry and painting expressed the Tao not only to the artist but to the viewer as well. Along with gardens, tray landscapes and distinctive rocks, they served to stimulate the taoist aspect of the literati's mind, when by the Sung period, most lived in an urban culture.<sup>78</sup> Kuo Hsi (1020–1090), a major landscape painter of the Northern Sung Academy, begins his 'Essay on Landscape Painting' with a discussion of their purpose:

Why does a virtuous man take delight in landscapes? . . . The din of the dusty world and the locked-in-ness of human habitations are what human nature habitually abhors; while, on the contrary, haze, mist and the haunting spirit of the mountains are what human nature seeks, and yet can rarely find. . . . [But] in the face of such duties [the confucian virtues] the benevolent man cannot seclude himself and shun the world. . . . Having no access to the landscapes, the lover of forest and stream, the friend of mist and haze, enjoys them in his dreams. How delightful to have a landscape painted by a skilled hand! Without leaving the room, at once, he finds himself among the streams and ravines. . . . Does not such a scene satisfy his mind and captivate his heart?<sup>79</sup>

Kuo Hsi was a professional painter who stressed representation rather than expression. A contemporary, Su Shih (Tung-p'o, 1037–1101), together with several friends anticipated the development of the *wen-jen* painting concept,<sup>80</sup> in which the goals are reversed—painting expresses the painter, not the subject, to lead to a communication of mind to mind. In seeking past models, he preferred the work of Wang Wei, the T'ang literati poet-painter (oriented towards ch'an buddhism) to the most noted professional painter of that day. It was the start of an élite theory that valued the products of their



own class, turning painting into an amateur activity. As a literati avocation with the concomitant valuing of amateur qualities over professional skill, painting was closely related to calligraphy.<sup>81</sup>

Su Shih was a friend of Mi Fu, and the two were later listed among the 'Four Masters' of Sung calligraphy. Su Shih was one of the major Chinese poets of all time, an important official (when not in political exile) who was leader of the conservative faction in Sung politics, and an amateur painter. His paintings were apparently created spontaneously after attaining an alcoholic trance. Mi Fu wrote of him:

When I first saw him, he was slightly drunk and said: 'Could you paste this paper on the wall? It is Kuan-yin paper.' Then he rose and made two bamboos, a bare tree, and a strange rock.<sup>82</sup>

Another painter described Su Shih's tendency at literary gatherings to fall asleep after several cups of wine, then awaken and rapidly paint.<sup>83</sup> Su Shih explicitly relates trance to artistic activity in a poem on the painting of his close friend Wen T'ung:

When Yü-k'c paints bamboo  
He sees bamboo, not himself.  
Not only is he unaware of himself  
Trance-like he leaves his body.  
Body and soul once merged  
Endless freshness flows.  
Since Chuang [-tzu] is no longer here  
Who else can know such absorption.<sup>84</sup>

By the Sung period, given the nature of the examination system and a heightened interest in reviving the confucian tradition, the intelligentsia were primarily oriented towards confucianism. However, in their leisure time and during periods of retirement, they tended to focus on institutional and philosophical taoism and ch'an buddhism<sup>85</sup> and expressed this interest, often at social gatherings, in poetry, calligraphy and painting. Su Shih was involved with both taoism and buddhism and his two 'Red Cliff Odes',<sup>86</sup> are among the finest expressions of taoist thought (and his writing of them considered among the finest examples of calligraphy). A contemporary, Huang T'ing-chien (1045-1105), another major poet, explicitly related painting to the techniques of ch'an: 'At first I could not appreciate painting, but then by practising meditation (*ch'an*), I came to understand the efficacy of effortlessness, and by studying *Tao* I realized that perfect *Tao* is simple.  
...<sup>87</sup>

Following the Mongol conquest of China (13th century), many literati would not (or could not, as the case may be) serve the foreign Yüan reign. As hermits (in the Chinese sense), they focused their lives on calligraphy and



painting. In reaction to the professional court painters of the preceding Southern Sung period, the term *wen-jen hua* (literati painting) came into use, and this concept was further developed, ironically, by one who did accept office (after ten years of Mongol reign), Chao Meng-fu. He sought his models in the tradition of Su Shih and Mi Fu, who had sought theirs in Wang Wei. By example, Chao was highly influential on the calligraphy and painting of his own as well as succeeding eras.<sup>88</sup> (This pattern was again repeated with the collapse of the succeeding Ming dynasty and the return of foreign rule by the Manchus in the mid-seventeenth century. A number of the élite became ch'an monks or 'mad' hermits and these 'Individualist Painters' produced brilliantly innovative works based on the now historic Yüan models.)<sup>89</sup>

Due to a number of political factors (Ming imperial despotism, reliance on eunuchs, regional quota system for civil servants), there developed, especially in Chiang-nan, that locus of culture, wealth and scenery that has continually been the centre of the arts since the fourth century, a class of 'retired scholars.' Their 'affluence, either inherited or acquired during their period of service, enabled them to spend their leisure in elegant and aesthetic ways: building gardens and libraries, collecting books and works of art, exchanging invitations to literary banquets, practising calligraphy and painting.'<sup>90</sup>

An official for most of his life reaching the office of President of the Board of Rites, Tung Ch'i-ch'ang codified the theory of the *wen-jen hua*, was considered the greatest calligrapher since Chao Meng-fu, and was a noted poet. He was highly influenced by the Ming revival of ch'an buddhism and the development of Wang Yang-ming Neo-Confucianism, which stressed meditation and incorporated the mystic experience.<sup>91</sup> At the end of his life in 1636, Tung had his family dress him in taoist garb and said: 'Although I have occupied some of the highest positions in the government, I never belonged there. I belong to the "clouds and the waters", as you can see from my appearance and manner. . . .'<sup>92</sup>

The primary purpose of his theory of art was to distinguish between literati painters (amateurs who painted by intuition) from professionals (who painted by design). The literati sought 'spiritual harmony': 'a lofty and ecstatic aesthetic state, the most abstract of poetic essences.'<sup>93</sup> Tung utilized the distinction between Northern and Southern ch'an buddhism (the latter stressing sudden enlightenment, a concept discussed earlier by Hsieh Ling-yün) to distinguish between professional and literati painters:

When painting was approached with such a subjective, transcendent attitude, the creative process itself, and not the end product, became first in importance. Art was a form of self-realization; and since brush and ink were the most direct and effective means for self-expression, they were accorded primacy over other formal pictorial elements such as composition.<sup>94</sup>



His aesthetic theories determined the standard for both 'individualist' and court artists in following centuries.

### CONCLUSIONS

There is nothing original in any of the preceding statements; to a traditionally educated Chinese, what has been discussed above is matter of fact. The point of this essay is how aesthetic expression in traditional China may be understood from a Western perspective, for both 'aesthetics' and 'religion' are Western concepts.

Harold Osborne has pointed to language itself as a major source of the difficulties in applying Western aesthetic concepts to China:

... the language and the concepts of Chinese [aesthetics] differ from those which we use and some considerable effort may be needed to bring them into connection with the art from which they are derived and to grasp what they are about in terms of the categories with which we are more familiar.<sup>95</sup>

The two terms in the title of this paper, 'aesthetics' and 'religion', are major problems in themselves. Neither of these terms have counterparts in Chinese and terms were created in the twentieth century to approximate them. However, the terms chosen tended to unduly delimit the range of phenomena included.<sup>96</sup>

'Aesthetics' has been translated as *mei-hsüeh* (lit.: 'the study of the beautiful'). *Mei* (etym.: a man with a head adornment in the form of ram's horns)<sup>97</sup> like *bellus* means 'beautiful' in the sense of 'pretty'; but *mei* is not a value in traditional Chinese aesthetics. Rather, a major value is *tzu-jan*, a term which includes in its meanings: 'Nature',<sup>98</sup> 'spontaneity/originality', and 'self-expression/self-indulgence'. However, as *mei-hsüeh* is understood to refer to the appreciation of art, it is not as problematic as the word 'religion'.

'Religion' has been translated as *ts'ung-chiao*, a translation that was of service to christian missionaries, but perhaps a disservice to scholars. *Chiao* in this sense refers to institutionalized forms of buddhism and taoism (and when buddhism became dominant, to the state cult of Confucius) that could be identified as opponents by the christian missionaries, but not to the primary religion of both élite and popular Chinese culture.<sup>99</sup> Alternative translations might have been *li*, which originally meant the ritual of sacrifice but came to mean ritual in all of its manifestations,<sup>100</sup> or else *wen*. *Wen* (etym.: a man with tattooing on his breast)<sup>101</sup> does mean writing, derived from its sense of design or pattern. But it also derives from the latter the sense of embellishment and civilization or cultural pattern. It designates the essence of élite culture as well as its basis, writing. Extending the concept of Clifford Geertz<sup>102</sup> from religion as a system of symbols with particular functions to the concept of a symbol itself having similar functions, *wen* could be translated as religion.



When we examine the history of the primary modes of élite aesthetic expression, from their origin to the establishment of their basic standards over the span of two millenium, we find considerable commonality. All the major personalities were involved with aspects leading to the development of taoism or later taoist-influenced institutional and/or philosophical developments: from Ch'u Yüan and a poorly understood institutionalized shamanism,<sup>103</sup> to the taoism of the later *Ch'u Tz'u* poems, to the *hsüan-hsüeh* ('neo-taoism') of Juan Chi, to the institutional taoism and gentry buddhism of the medieval founders of calligraphic art, landscape poetry and painting, to taoist philosophy and institutions as a complement to the confucianism of official life for the literati of the Sung and thereafter, to the ch'an buddhism and Wang Yang-ming neo-confucianism of the Ming theorists and practitioners. In all instances, it is the experience of aesthetic creation and of intuitive understanding of that experience by others that is emphasized.

It is to be further noted that virtually all of the persons discussed had been brought up in or had lived in a relatively small part of China, Chiang-nan ('Yangtse River South', including Hangchow, Suchow and Mount Lu), whose original traditions were different from those of the North, the home of the confucian tradition. (Even in the Han period, Ch'u had different religious traditions from the North and Wu, which was not part of the early Han politically or culturally, was the origin of many of the *fang-shih*). This area, which formed the locus of the emerging buddho-taoist traditions from the fourth century on, developed into a rich rice and silk producing region, the economic heart of China. Linked by extensive canal transportation networks to the various Chinese capitals (during its long history), Chiang-nan was the home of many wealthy literati and merchants. They built a number of large, complex *shan-shui* gardens which housed the literati artists they patronized. Chiang-nan was the favoured area of residence for literati who gained sufficient wealth in government service to allow for early retirement to artistic pursuits. The aesthetic traditions which developed there spread throughout the rest of China.

Although this paper has not focused on the terms and concepts of art criticism, a number have been noted in passing as deriving from the *Chuang-tzu* or ch'an buddhism. Susan Bush has argued that such references 'are quite understandable since the taoist classics were the only ancient stories that could be related to artistic creativity. In themselves, these taoist references need not indicate more than an imaginative interest in such literature.'<sup>104</sup> However, as has been indicated in this essay, the use of such terms does not occur, either in theory or practice, in isolation from both philosophical and institutional taoist values.<sup>105</sup>

When a functional approach to religion is applied to China, the nature of aesthetic experience is clarified. Aesthetic activity is the means by which the



*wen-jen* as *wen-jen* (i.e., with brush and ink) experience as well as express their experiences as individuals, a heady value given the rigidly conformist and non-self-assertive nature of most of their lives and their occupations. For with few exceptions, the élite continually functioned in highly ritualized dual hierarchies, that of clan and state. It is an experience usually based on contemplation or trance experience of nature (not necessarily direct), which in itself is the Tao. Aesthetic experience, then, is the experience of the taoist (*Tao-chia* and/or *-chia* or Ch'an as a later phase of taoism) component of the *wen-jen* gestalt (the dominant confucian aspect experienced primarily through state and family rituals); i.e. aesthetics serves as an alternative mode of religiosity for the traditional élite.<sup>106</sup>

The above conclusion is a generalizaation; indeed, a generalization concerning stereotypes. Typically, biographies reveal legends and the attitudes towards aesthetics, idealization. A *wen-jen* who engages in the taoist-derived genres of poetry, calligraphy or painting does not necessarily see himself engaged in a taoist or romantic activity. Should he become famous, others posthumously may see him in that light. Should he act the eccentric, it may be for a multitude of reasons: it is expected of him, it is a way of avoiding political recrimination,<sup>107</sup> or even because it may enhance the value of his product. However, varying degrees of religiosity are brought by different individuals to every religious phenomenon.<sup>108</sup> My point concerns the derivation of the primary modes of aesthetic activity and the relationship of experience to the dominant modes of religiosity.

This paper has focused on aesthetic experience rather than the art object, the usual subject for Western aesthetic consideration, because it is this aspect of aesthetics which elicits comparison with the West. Calligraphy and painting were evaluated on quite different criteria than other objects of *wen-jen* aesthetic appreciation such as archaic jades and ceramics. The former were appreciated by persons of the same class and training as the artists, while the latter were considered products of craftsmen, non-élite not worthy of consideration as persons; hence, the latter are purely objects. All the major aestheticians, as previously mentioned, were themselves considered major artists, and artists do not judge works of art by fellow artists from the standpoint of 'art objects' alone. Paintings and calligraphy, were accordingly evaluated and appreciated in two ways: from the standpoint of authenticity, including considerations of previous ownership, i.e. the intellectual; and, relevant to the theme of this paper, as a mechanism for creating an experience in the viewer corresponding to the experience of the artist, i.e. the emotional.

Since poetry, calligraphy and painting are often created in a social setting, they verge on performance. Because the viewer as a *wen-jen* was also a master of the brush, in viewing the work, he was automatically aware of the



process of creation and concentrated on the brushwork in the order of its application to the paper or silk. Furthermore, respected pieces of *wen-jen* painting and calligraphy were not hung on walls as in the West, but unrolled for viewing at approximately the same distance as brushed by the artist, often in a similar social milieu as when created. Hence, in being continually recreated, the works continued as event. It was the viewer's concentration on technique, i.e. brushwork, that enabled the 'mind-to-mind' communication to take place.<sup>109</sup>

The above thoughts are the result of a process of cross-cultural understanding which began twenty years ago on showing to a calligrapher in Taiwan a tiny *t'ien-huang* seal I had just acquired cut with the characters 'pai yün hsin' (white cloud heart/mind). That meeting blossomed into a continued friendship and this essay which is an imperfect translation of my intuition of my friend's intuition of the import of those words.

### POSTSCRIPT

On a recent trip to China (September 1983) after this paper was written, I travelled in the Chiang-nan region, still a locus for extensive internal tourism, where so many of the activities discussed took place. I was surprised to find a revival of the 'Three Incomparables'. Not only was I informed of this by contemporary calligraphers in Hangchow, but I found the calligraphy and painting supply shops thronged by young adults. I understand that young factory workers are studying calligraphy at night (surely a more interesting way to spend an evening than the frequent political awareness meetings of the Cultural Revolution) and the activity is being introduced into the elementary schools. Many of the gardens that were the residences for literati artists have recently been refurbished and are popular recreation (in its literal sense) for both local residents and tourists from all over China. How these activities relate to the changing dominant ideological/behavioural pattern—i.e. the religious dimension of these activities—is a question too soon to be answered.<sup>110</sup>

### NOTES

An early version of this paper was delivered at a symposium on aesthetics sponsored by the Society for the Study of Asian and Comparative Philosophy in conjunction with the meeting of the Eastern Branch of the American Philosophical Society (New York: 1979)

- 1 e.g., Thomas Monroe, *Oriental Aesthetics*, Cleveland, Western Reserve University Press 1965, p. 21ff.
- 2 Although music was also an aspect of *wen-jen* culture, it became of secondary importance. (This was not the situation in the 3rd–5th centuries, and the poets, calligraphers and painters of this period discussed below all played the *ch'in*.) Although *ch'in* music is discussed with the terms and concepts which are the



focus of this paper, space limitation precludes its inclusion. See, for example, Robert Hans van Gulik, *The Lore of the Chinese Lute*, Tokyo, Sophia University 1940.

- 3 Regardless of the early theories of Marcel Granet (*Chinese Civilization* London, Kegan Paul 1930), China has been patriarchal and patrilineal from as early as we have data, approximately 1300 BCE. Although there were some women poets and scholars, these opportunities declined approximately a thousand years ago with the development of neo-confucianism (see, for example, Howard S. Levy, *Chinese Footbinding*, New York, Bell Publishing Co. 1967, pp. 40–49). Only males were eligible to take the civil-service examinations, the only recognized and legitimate means for obtaining élite status, socially acceptable wealth, and political power. A woman's status primarily depended on that of her husband and secondarily on her parents, but not on her own accomplishments.
- 4 Theoretically, there were four occupations (two root: scholar-official, farmer; and two branch: artisan and merchant) but only two classes: scholar-officials and all others (excepting the imperial family who were above all such distinctions). In actuality, merchants vied with the scholar-officials for power and status. A millenium and a half of power struggles (scholars, military, merchants, eunuchs, hereditary aristocracy) were ultimately won by the scholars, who wore distinctive garb and had a special, legal status, with the full development of the civil-service system in the eleventh century. Merchants were co-opted into the system by being allowed to purchase civil-service ranks at a price which reduced their economic power. Recent scholarship has expanded this view to include a somewhat differently educated middle-class of middling-wealthy merchants, professionals (physicians, etc.), and government clerks, who were often oriented towards Taoism and formed poetry and calligraphy circles.
- 5 The division of religion in China by function (clan, state, family, community and individual) is, I believe, far more useful than the older forced impression of Western concepts of belief. See Laurence G. Thompson, *Chinese Religion: An Introduction*, Belmont, California, Dickenson Publishing Co. 1969.
- 6 It must be understood that in China in comparison to the West, individuality was and is suppressed by the dominant ideology and circumstances. A person is brought up to be a member of a unit, the family, and among the élite, the clan and state as well (now party and people). Hence individuality, although less common, is considered more noteworthy.
- 7 Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, New York, Grove Press 1961 ed., p. 143.
- 8 Published translations are by Willis Barnstone and Ko Ching-po (*The Poems of Mao Tse-tung*, New York, Harper & Row 1972), Jerome Ch'en (*Mao and the Chinese Revolution*, Oxford, Oxford University Press 1965, p. 351), Stuart Schram (*Mao Tse-tung*, Baltimore, Penguin Books n.d., p. 299), and in *Mao Tsetung Poems* (Peking: 1976 bilingual ed.). The many references to Mount Lu in this essay were not deliberate but certainly are more than coincidence: Pao Chao, Hsieh Ling-yün, Tsung Ping, possibly T'ao Ch'ien (the 'southern mountain' in the poem translated below is believed by some to be Mount Lu) and Mao Tse-tung.
- 9 i.e., the Yangtze River.
- 10 Which merge into the Yangtze.
- 11 Or 'floats by the Yellow Crane Tower.'



- 12 Suchow, Changchow and Huchow.
- 13 See, for example, Wai-lim Yip, *Chinese Poetry: Major Modes and Genres*, Berkeley, University of California Press 1976, p. 323.
- 14 The Yellow Crane Tower was built to commemorate the place where, according to legend, a person attained *hsien*hood, flying off on a yellow crane. Mao referred to the Tower in an early (1927) poem, 'Tower of the Yellow Crane' (for translation and text, see Barnstone and Ko, p. 37).
- 15 Yip, p. 362.
- 16 E.g., *Chuang-tzu*, 12: The Sage '... after a millenium, weary of the world, he leaves and ascends to the *hsien*, riding a white cloud up to the celestial village.'
- 17 There is a more complete analysis of *hsien* and 'white cloud' in my 'From Shaman to Mystic in the *Chuang-tzu*', *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies* 3 (1982), pp. 27-45.
- 18 Yip, p. 199. Here, Pao Chao reflects the confusion that has developed between shamanistic symbols and the mystic experience.
- 19 Following my understanding of his poem provided below.
- 20 In a sense, the communist ideal where government, no longer needed, has withered away, with the Chinese agrarian focus.
- 21 e.g., Schram, *op. cit.*
- 22 Whether communism in China should be considered a religion has long been debated. From a functional standpoint, there is little question in my mind that it should be. For arguments of varying quality, see, for example, Ninian Smart (Mao, 1974) and Richard S. Bush (*Religion in Communist China*, 1970). Mao, himself, subsumed aesthetic activity to communist imperatives (see his 'Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art', 1942). Indeed, his view that art must exclusively serve the needs of society is similar to those of the early Confucian theorists. Wolfgang Bauer has related Mao's famous Yangtze swims (swimming as a variation of the flying metaphor) to the association of taoism with 'the idea of renewal, mobility and revolution' (*China and the Search for Happiness*, trans. by Michael Shaw, New York, Seabury Press 1976, pp. 411-18).
- 23 From the *Tu-lo yüan chi* (Record of the Garden for Solitary Enjoyment).
- 24 There is a growing awareness that a bicultural traditional China (e.g., Leon E. Stover, *China, A Cultural Ecology*, New York, New American Library 1974) is overly simplistic. For example, Michael Saso has been accumulating evidence of an educated middle class which included poetry circles and taoist initiates (private communication).
- 25 For the aesthetics of stones, see my 'Rocks, Stones and Seals: An Excursion into Taoist Aesthetics', *Oriental Art* (forthcoming).
- 26 This biography was collected from the subject, an old friend of mine, on a trip to Taiwan (1978-79). Appreciation is due to the Faculty of Arts at York University which partially subsidized the trip with a research grant.
- 27 In another biography I collected, a Ch'an scholar-monk from a distinguished Honan family oriented towards buddhism (grandfather had been a general during the Ch'ing dynasty), had taken his vows after retiring from the army in Taiwan with the rank of Lieut. Colonel (and with no remaining family connections and his adopted son married). Before joining the army after the Japanese military invasion in 1937, he had decided to spend 'twenty years serving the state and twenty years attending to his own religious needs.' It is an interesting solution to the problem in existence as early as the third century: the



- 'opposing claims of activism and quietism' (Richard B. Mather, 'The Controversy over Conformity and Naturalness During the Six Dynasties', *History of Religion* 9 [1969-70], p. 169).
- 28 '... the renunciation of the official life ... is the keystone of Chinese eremitism ... which distinguishes it from the connotations of the word in other civilizations. ...' (Frederick W. Mote, 'Confucian Eremitism in the Yüan Period', Arthur F. Wright (ed.), *The Confucian Persuasion*, Stanford, Stanford University Press 1960, p. 204.
- 29 For a superb essay on the relationship of all three, see Michael Sullivan, *The Three Perfections, Chinese Painting, Poetry and Calligraphy*, London, Thames and Hudson 1974.
- 30 Prose is not discussed because essays and memorials to the throne more commonly were on *ju-chia* themes and writing fiction was not considered a proper *wen-jen* avocation. For a discussion of Chinese prose, see my *Guide to Chinese Prose*, Boston, G. K. Hall 2nd ed. 1984.
- 31 The *Odes*, a collection of clan and folk songs, according to tradition edited by Confucius, which became part of the Canon, hence, basic to education.
- 32 For translation, see David Hawkes, *Ch'u Tz'u, The Songs of the South*, Oxford, Oxford University Press 1959.
- 33 Most of the *Chiu chang*, *Yüan yu*, *Chiu pien*, *Chiu huai*, *Chiu t'an* (following the dating of Hawkes).
- 34 Last lines of *Yüan yu*; p. 87.
- 35 From 'Pei hui feng' in *Chiu chang*; Hawkes, p. 78.
- 36 From *Chiu pien*; Hawkes, p. 99.
- 37 See Max Kaltenmark, 'The Ideology of the T'ai-p'ing ching', in H. Welch and A. Seidel (ed.), *Facets of Taoism*, New Haven, Yale University Press 1979, pp. 19-45.
- 38 Lit. 'Abstruse Learning', usually trans. 'Neo-Taoism'; actually arises out of *juchia*.
- 39 Etienne Balazs, 'La crise sociale et la philosophie politique à la fin des Han', *T'oung Pao* 38 (1950), p. 55.
- 40 Donald Holzman, Poetry and Politics: *The Life and Works of Juan Chi, A.D. 210-263*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1976, p. 23.
- 41 Drinking alcohol had a number of functions in regard to aesthetics. First, alcoholism, whether real or feigned, could be used as an excuse to avoid the normal political life of the educated. Secondly, the excuse of being drunk, here symbolic rather than actual, allowed for the dropping of complex precedence and rituals among the educated (who were with few exceptions hierarchically ranked officials or 'retired' officials) enabling them to relax at literary and artistic gatherings. Third, in some cases at least, it was used to gain ecstatic states to facilitate spontaneous artistic creations.
- 42 *Chin shu*, 49; Holtzman, p. 234.
- 43 Ibid., p. 157.
- 44 Ch'ih Sung-tzu and Wang-tzu Ch'ao—two 'immortals'.
- 45 Referring to breathing practises for achieving longevity.
- 46 See my 'From Shaman to Mystic. ...'
- 47 Holtzman, p. 169.
- 48 Ibid., p. 182.
- 49 Often a third poet, Pao Chao, is included, who accords well with the following pattern, both in regard to the use of wine and nature mysticism; e.g., the last lines of his previously mentioned 'Ascend Mount Lu':



Among the steep precipices, traces of Transformation.  
 Upon the peaks, the lasting spirit.  
 To follow this delight in mountain's natures  
 And deep love for long excursions  
 We will mount forever upon the road of feathered men  
 And merge forever with smoke and mist. (Yip, p. 199)

- 50 James R. Hightower, trans., *The Poetry of T'ao Ch'ien*, Oxford, Oxford University Press 1970, p. 58.
- 51 The best study is that of Hightower.
- 52 Just how poor he was is open to debate.
- 53 e.g., Chang Chung-yüan, *Creativity and Taoism*, New York, The Julian Press 1963, pp. 190–91. Chang also provides a number of T'ang poems related to meditation and trance experience, pp. 169–98.
- 54 Hightower, p. 30. Hightower argues that the poem rather is concerned with the search for longevity; but he earlier (p. 6) points out that this search was not of particular importance to T'ao Ch'ien.
- 55 See, for example, J. D. Frodsham, *The Murmuring Stream*, Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya Press 1967, from which the following data was taken.
- 56 Ibid., p. 100. The passage continues: 'It brings on that state of mystical detachment which could either be described in Taoist terms . . . or as the trance of visualizing the Buddha, *buddhānusr̥ti-samādhi*.'
- 57 Ibid., p. 65.
- 58 Ibid., p. 147.
- 59 The brevity necessary to an essay requires me to forego discussion of the relationship between the origin of writing (and the Chinese understanding of the origin of writing) and religion and the continued influence of this understanding on the aesthetics of calligraphy. For an excellent article on this subject, see Jonathan Chaves, 'The Legacy of Ts'ang Chieh: The Written Word as Magic', *Oriental Art* 23 (1977), pp. 200–215: '... the fact that Chinese writing originated in an environment of magic, perhaps even of shamanism, and that these roots were never entirely forgotten. During the late Han and Six Dynasties periods, when calligraphy was transformed into the medium of aesthetic expression we are familiar with ... there began the long-lived tradition of describing calligraphy in terms of nature imagery. But this very nature imagery is the link, I believe, between archaic conceptions of writing as magic and later attempts to characterize the inner power of this remarkable art form' (p. 200).
- 60 See Tsuen-hsuei Tsien, *Written on Bamboo and Silk*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press 1962.
- 61 Lothar Ledderose, *Mi Fu and the Classical Tradition of Chinese Calligraphy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press 1979, pp. 30–31.
- 62 Hisayaki Miyakawa, 'Local Cults and Mount Lu at the Time of Sun En's Rebellion', in Welch and Seidel, pp. 84 and 99.
- 63 See E. Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, (Leiden, E. J. Brill 1959).
- 64 The accuracy of this tradition is questionable. What is certain is that the T'ai-tsung Emperor of the T'ang dynasty (r. 626–49) and his appointed advisor Ch'u Sui-liang (596–658) are responsible for basing the aesthetic standards on what were purported to be numerous examples of the Wangs' calligraphy. See Ledderose, pp. 24–28.



- 65 The two medieval critics responsible for propagating the tradition of the Wangs, Yang Hsien (370–442) and T'ao Hung-ching (456–536), were also important personages in the development of institutional taoism.
- 66 Ch'en Yin-k'o, 'T'ien-shih-tao yü Pin-hai ti-ch'eng chih kuan-hsi', *Bull. of the National Research Institute of History and Philosophy, Academic Sinica* 3 (1983), pp. 462–66. For nineteenth-century aspects, see J. J. M. deGroot, *The Religious System of China*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1910, vol. VI, pp. 1024–61.
- 67 See Michael Strickmann, 'On the Alchemy of T'ao Hung-ching', Welch and Seidel: pp. 132–92, esp. 139–40.
- 68 For current practises in Taiwan, see David K. Jordan, *Gods, Ghosts and Ancestors*, Berkeley, University of California Press 1972, pp. 64–67. See also deGroot, vol. VI, pp. 1295–1322.
- 69 Ledderose, 'Some Taoist Elements in Six Dynasties Calligraphy' (unpublished paper delivered before the Yale University Conference on Chinese Calligraphy, 1977).
- 70 Hsieh An (a piece of his was in Mi Fu's collection [Ledderose, *Mi Fu*, p. 48]) and Hsieh Ling-yün were noted calligraphers; both were associated with institutional taoism. The origin of the classic tradition of calligraphy was more a fourth-century phenomenon than solely that of the two Wangs.
- 71 Ibid., p. 56. The term translated as 'tranquility' (*p'ing-tan*, 'calm and easy' in the following) was also a value applied at this time to poetry: 'In writing poetry, there is no past or present/The only thing is to be calm and easy.' (Mei Yao-ch'en [1002–1060]—Yoshikawa Kōjirō, *An Introduction to Sung Poetry*, trans. by Burton Watson, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press 1967, p. 39.) Chaves translates the term 'even and bland'—for history and an excellent discussion of the term, see his *Mei Yao-ch'en and the Development of Early Sung Poetry*, New York, Columbia University Press 1976, p. 114ff. As well, the same term ('blandness' below) and naturalness were applied by Mi Fu to painting: 'Tung Yüan has much blandness and naturalness (*p'ing-tan t'ien-chen*). . . .' (Susan Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press 1971, p. 72.)
- 72 The extremes to which calligraphy could be carried in Ch'an is exemplified by the 'Mad *ts'ao-shu*' of the Monk Huai-su; e.g., as described in the poem attributed to Li Po:
- The Master high on wine, sits in his rope-chair  
in an instant he has covered thousands of sheets:  
the room is filled with whirlwinds and driving  
rains, falling flowers and flying snowflakes!  
He stands, goes over to the wall, with a single sweep  
he brushes a line of words as big as dippers!  
We hear the voices of gods and demons.  
(Chaves, 'The legacy of Ts'ang Chieh', p. 212)
- 73 Mi Fu as trans. by Ledderose, *Mi Fu*, p. 58.
- 74 James Liu enumerates in *The Art of Chinese Poetry*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press 1966, p. 63ff., four critical approaches to poetry of which my treatment only concerns two (poetry as self-expression and as contemplation) and excludes two (poetry as moral instruction and social comment and as literary exercise).
- 75 Zürcher, Vol. I, pp. 218–19.
- 76 Trans. by Leon Hurvitz, 'Tsong Ping's Commentary on Landscape Painting', *Artibus Asiae* 32 (1970), p. 148.



- 77 Hurvitz, p. 151.
- 78 The reverse is also true, the mountains stimulated the painter: 'At the beginning of the Ming period, when he [Wang Li (b. 1322)] was about fifty, he climbed the summit of Hua-shan, the towering mountain of Shensi Province that drew pilgrims both as a Taoist holy place and for its awesome scenery. The experience was apparently overwhelming, transforming his life and his painting style. . . . When asked later who his teacher had been, he replied: "My teacher is my mind; its teachers are my eyes; their teacher is Hua-shan. That's all".' (James Cahill, *Parting at the Shore, Chinese Painting of the Early and Middle Ming Dynasty, 1368-1580*, Tokyo, Weatherhill 1978, pp. 5-6.)
- 79 Trans. by Shio Sakanashi, *Kuo Hsi, An Essay on Landscape Painting*, London, John Murray 1935, pp. 32-33.
- 80 James Cahill, 'Confucian Elements in the Theory of Painting', in Wright, p. 129.
- 81 'The more painting emphasized inner experience and resembled calligraphy, the more it devalued representational context in favor of the purely aesthetic.' Weng Fong, 'Archaism as a "Primitive" Style', in Christian F. Murck (ed.), *Artist and Traditions*, Princeton University Press 1976, p. 91.
- 82 Bush, p. 9.
- 83 Lin Yutang, *The Gay Genius*, New York, John Day 1947, p. 277. In Su Shih's own words:  
 When my empty bowels receive wine, angular strokes come forth,  
 And my heart's criss-crossings give birth to bamboo and rock.  
 What is about to be produced in abundance cannot be contained:  
 It erupts on your snow-white wall. (Bush, p. 35.)
- 84 Joan Stanly-Baker, 'The Development of Brush-Modes in Sung and Yüan', *Artibus Asiae* 39 (1977), p. 14.
- 85 It has been common among earlier Western authors to discuss Chinese painting, etc., as due to taoism and ch'an buddhism as opposed to confucianism, rather than as complementary. This misleading approach is expertly deflated by Cahill in his 'Confucian Elements. . . .'
- 86 For translation, see the one by A. C. Graham in Cyril Birch (ed.), *Anthology of Chinese Literature*, New York, Grove Press 1965, vol. I, pp. 381-82.
- 87 Bush, p. 49. Susan Bush has criticized an approach that emphasizes a religious dimension to literati painting, especially Nicole Vandier-Nicholas's study of Mi Fu and painting (*Art et sagesse en Chine: Mi Fou [1051-1107]*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France 1963), pointing out that 'the new focus on artistic creation was symptomatic of a growing self-awareness that was more psychological than mystical' (Bush, p. 66). As I accept trance experiences including the mystic experience as psychological phenomena, I am not sure such distinction negates the religious aspect. Bush goes on to write: 'Sung art theory raised the status of painting by underlining its mental and spiritual requirements. Painting was not merely a craft, it was an intellectual *experience* and, hence, an art. . . .' [italics mine]. To me it is clear that for many literati, the experience was both ecstatic and intellectual, but, in any case, it is the fact of its being an experience that is at the heart of my argument, an experience counter to the ritual of official and clan life.
- 88 Although he left little writing on aesthetic theory, other major Yüan dynasty painters left poems reflecting the Northern Sung literati views. Wu Chen (1280-1354) wrote 'When I begin to paint I am not conscious of myself/And am



completely unaware of the brush in my hand.' (Bush, p. 132) Ni Tsan (1301-1374) wrote

By the eastern sea there is a sick man,  
Who calls himself "mistaken" and "extreme."  
When he paints walls and sketches on silk and paper,  
Isn't it an overflow of his madness? (Bush, p. 134.)

- 89 The major figure was Tao-chi (Shih-t'ao, 1641-c.1720) whose treatise on painting is of major interest and relates to the theme of this paper; space does not permit discussion. See Ju-hsi Chou, *The 'Hua-yü-lu' and Tao-chi's Theory of Painting*, Tempe, Ariz., Arizona State University Center for Asian Studies 1977.
- 90 Cahill, *Parting at the Shore*, p. 60. Another class also developed, the 'scholar-official manque'. 'His position in society is anomalous, since his education has not been put to the normal use: he is learned and talented without possessing either wealth or rank. Typically, in China, such an artist [true also of poets] cultivates in his life and art an attitude of eccentricity, or at least evidences a degree of emancipation from the rules and conventions to which others, whose roles are better defined, are bound'. (Ibid., p. 99; see also pp. 163-66.)
- 91 e.g., Rodney L. Taylor, 'The Centered Self: Religious Autobiography in the Neo-Confucian Tradition', *History of Religions* 17 (1978), p. 279.
- 92 Trans. by Nelson I. Wu, 'Tung Ch'i-ch'ang: Apathy in Government and Fervor in Art', in Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett (ed.), *Confucian Personalities*, Stanford, Stanford University Press 1962, p. 293.
- 93 Wai-kam Ho, 'Tung Ch'i-ch'ang's New Orthodoxy', in Murck, p. 127.
- 94 Ibid., p. 122.
- 95 *Aesthetics and Art Theory*, London, Harlow, Longmans 1968, p. 67. There has been considerable work done in regard to this problem in the last decade, for example the excellent studies in Murck, *Artist and Traditions*, concerning one major aesthetic concept, antiquity, in its manifold applications.
- 96 The inevitable problems caused by substituting terms in one language for concept in another are or were well understood in China and the West. Hence, in both, after the confusion caused by terms substitution for basic Sanskrit religious terms, both cultures turned to rendering the foreign term phonetically rather than by translation.
- 97 Bernhard Karlgren, *Grammata Serica Recesa*, Stockholm, The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities 1957, p. 151.
- 98 Also expressed by related terms; e.g., *t'ien-jan*, etc.
- 99 I have dealt with this problem in greater extent in "'Religion" and Chinese Culture: A Fundamental Definition and Suggested Approach' in Michael Pye and Peter McKenzie (eds.), *History of Religions*, Leicester Studies in Religion II, p. 109.
- 100 While ideology (or belief) may be of primary importance in Christianity and Islam, it has become increasingly apparent that ritual is of primary importance in Chinese religion, both elite ('... agnosticism of the elite religion, to the central place of rites within it. ... But the rites were no less important for this agnosticism. The emphasis was on the rites themselves, not their object.' G. William Skinner, quoted in Ho P'ing-ti, *The Cradle of the East*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1965, p. 325) and popular ('The perspective of folk religion is fundamentally *active*; believers experience religious reality directly through purposeful behavior, especially ritual.' S. Harrell, 'Soul in Chinese Religion', *Journal of Asian Studies* 38 [1979], p. 520).



- 101 Karligen, p. 131.
- 102 In 'Religion as A Cultural System', in M. Banton (ed.), *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, London, Tavistock Publications 1966, pp. 1-46.
- 103 For the state of our knowledge of Ch'u religion, see John Major, 'Research Priorities in the Study of Ch'u Religion', *History of Religions* 17 (1978), pp. 226-243.
- 104 Bush, p. 48.
- 105 That is not to say that terms relating to trance flight or the mystic experience in much earlier periods do not become clichés in latter periods. On the other hand, their becoming stylized expressions does not mean they are entirely devoid of the original religious context; see, for example, Kao Ch'i's, 'The Song of the Man of the Green Hill', translated by Frederick W. Mote, 'A Fourteenth Century Poet: Kao Ch'i', in Wright & Twitchett, pp. 243-44.
- 106 Continuing from footnote no. 3, although female children of élite families tended to be given some education to the point that many could write poetry, the alternative mode of religiosity for women was usually popular buddhism, the dominant mode being the family rituals (they were ineligible to participate in clan and state rituals). An exposition of the reasons for this development would be an essay in itself. Even marital couples that were close (an unusual situation among the élite as males and females led rather separate lives) had differing religious ideologies (see, for example, the autobiography of an artist on the bottom fringe of the élite, Shen Fu, *Fu Sheng liu chi* [Six Chapters from a Floating Life]—several translations available).
- 107 e.g., T'ang Yin, Chu Ta, etc.
- 108 For example, from my experience in contemporary Ch'an monasteries in Taiwan, I found that the majority of monks became so for the most mundane of reasons, and their activity in the monastery may have meant no more to them than bookkeeping to a clerk who is not particularly fond of keeping figures.
- 109 In several recent articles a scholar who is a Ch'an monk, Ming-fu, has argued that landscape painting from its inception has been intimately related to meditation. For example, the painting of Tsung Ping developed from meditational practices, and, by the seventeenth century, Ch'an monks used painting in regard to both activity and object in their religious teaching. e.g., "'Hua-ch'an" yü "Ch'an Hua"', *Fo-chiao wen-hua hsüeh-pao*, Taiwan, Oct. 1976.
- 110 Appreciation is due to the Faculty of Arts at York University for a research grant which partially subsidized the trip.

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# WESTERN ISLAMIC SCHOLARSHIP AND BAHÁ'Í ORIGINS

**Muhammad Afnán and William S. Hatcher**

## INTRODUCTION

In 1974, Denis MacEoin published an article entitled 'Oriental Scholarship and the Bahá'í Faith'<sup>1</sup> in which he deplored the lack of attention given during the preceding decades to the Bahá'í Faith by Western scholars of Eastern religions. He pointed out, among other things, that the Bahá'í Faith, having originated at a critical period in the recent history of the Islamic world, and having since exhibited substantial expansion, growth, and development, would appear to be worthy of significant consideration by scholars. At the time of MacEoin's article, however, virtually the only worker in the area seemed to be the Bahá'í scholar H. M. Balyuzi, writing in English and using a number of yet unpublished and/or untranslated sources. Balyuzi's work, *Edward Granville Browne and the Bahá'í Faith*<sup>2</sup>, published in 1970, ended an almost fifty-year hiatus in the tradition started by such Western writers as Gobineau, Nicolas, and most importantly Browne himself, the subject of Balyuzi's book.

This long period of scholarly neglect of the Bahá'í Faith was particularly unfortunate for several reasons. In the first place, a number of highly significant additions to the literature of the Bahá'í Faith took place during the period from 1920 to 1970. For example, in 1932, Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, published his annotated translation of Nabíl's narrative of the early days of the Bábí Faith.<sup>3</sup> Nabíl's history was important not only because he was himself an eyewitness to and a participant in so many of the events which he recounts, but also because he consulted scores of other witnesses to those events of which he had no first-hand knowledge. As his work unfolds, Nabíl gives the names of those persons on whose direct knowledge each particular incident is based. Other examples of additions to Bahá'í literature during this period are the remarkable English translations by Shoghi Effendi of a number of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh.

All of these publications increased vastly the quantity of primary material accessible to any serious student of the Bahá'í Faith, whether from the



historical or the philosophical point of view. Nevertheless, the image of the Bahá'í Faith in scholarly circles during the period 1920–1970 was superficial and was largely formed without study (or perhaps even awareness) of these rich additions to Bahá'í literature.

Another reason that the lengthy gap in scholarly consideration of the Bahá'í Faith within the Western academic milieu was particularly unfortunate is that E. G. Browne, the foremost Western student of the nascent Bahá'í movement, made, in the latter years of his life, a number of rather arbitrary and doubtful judgements concerning the Bahá'í Faith. As a careful consideration of Browne and his work is the very focus of the Balyuzi book cited above, there is no reason to enter into a detailed discussion here. Suffice it to say that the series of Bahá'í studies undertaken by Browne in his later years was based on materials of increasingly doubtful authenticity and value, leading finally to the inclusion of the personal philosophical musings of certain writers whose doctrines had not even the remotest connection with Bahá'í teachings. That a person of Browne's stature in the academic world published such material undoubtedly served to obscure the perception of the Bahá'í Faith by subsequent scholars.

Since the appearance of Balyuzi's study on Browne and the 1974 MacEoin article, a number of younger Western Islamic scholars have undertaken various critical studies of the Bahá'í Faith and its origins. In particular, MacEoin himself has gone on to obtain a doctorate in the field of Islamic studies, and has begun to publish articles in various academic journals in which he purports to deal in a scholarly and objective manner with a number of questions relating to the birth and development of the Bahá'í Faith. The cogency of the perspective on Bahá'í scholarship contained in MacEoin's 1974 article certainly raised expectations that his future work would be of comparable quality. Unhappily, such expectations have not been fulfilled by his recent publications.

In the article on 'Abdu'l-Bahá appearing in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*<sup>4</sup>, MacEoin discusses the teachings presented by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the course of his travels to the West. Although 'Abdu'l-Bahá clearly stated that the universal principles which he elaborated in his talks were all based on the writings and teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, MacEoin implies that this is not completely so. MacEoin hints that at least some of them were new, possibly borrowed from or influenced by certain of the liberal and humanitarian movements of thought then current in the West. Such a contention has been thoroughly refuted in a recent issue of *Andalib*<sup>5</sup> where each of the ideas and principles advanced by 'Abdu'l-Bahá is traced to specific books and tablets of Bahá'u'lláh. Thus, the unsubstantiated thesis of MacEoin's *Encyclopaedia Iranica* article reflects a rather surprising ignorance of important segments of the basic literature of the Bahá'í Faith.<sup>6</sup>



In another recent article, 'The Bábí Concept of Holy War'<sup>7</sup> (henceforth referred to as *Concept*), and in a review<sup>8</sup> of Moojan Momen's *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions, 1844-1944. Some Contemporary Western Accounts*<sup>9</sup> (henceforth referred to as *Review*), MacEoin again raises a number of basic issues concerning the history and doctrines of the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths and makes judgements about these issues. In the eyes of the present writers, many of these judgements appear to be extremely doubtful, and a consideration of them is the main focus of this article. Our comments represent the collaboration between an Eastern scholar who is well familiar with the intricacies of the Persian and Arabic languages and of the relevant texts of the Bábí and Bahá'í scriptures, and a scientifically trained Western writer.<sup>10</sup>

Without detracting in any way from the academic achievements of Western scholars such as MacEoin who have learned the Persian and Arabic languages, it is our hope that this kind of collaboration may allow for a more balanced and also more acute analysis of some of the basic issues involved in this field of study.

#### A NEW KEY TO BAHÁ'Í HISTORY?

In his article *Concept*, MacEoin's central concern is to elucidate what he sees as misconceptions regarding a number of important events in the early history of the Bábí Faith. He is particularly concerned with the violent confrontations between Bábís and Muslims at Shaykh Tabarsí, Nayríz, and Zanján. He points out (*Concept*, p. 94) that enemies of the Bábí Faith, and certain exponents of the established authorities of the day, consistently characterized these events as Bábí insurrections, uprisings, or rebellions. Bahá'í writers, on the other hand, have stressed the defensive nature of the Bábís' actions in the face of extreme provocation and persecution. Representative of the Bahá'í viewpoint (although this particular passage is not quoted by MacEoin) is the following statement written by George Townshend:

On these three occasions [Shaykh Tabarsí, Nayríz, and Zanján] a number of Bábís, driven to desperation, withdrew in concert from their houses to a chosen retreat and, erecting defensive works about them, defied in arms further pursuit. To any impartial witness it was evident that the mullás' allegations of a political motive were untrue. The Bábís showed themselves always ready—on assurance that they would be no longer molested for their religious beliefs—to return peacefully to their civil occupations. Nabíl emphasizes their care to refrain from aggression. They would fight for their lives with determined skill and strength; but they would not attack. Even in the midst of fierce conflict they would not drive home an advantage nor strike an unnecessary blow.<sup>11</sup>



The main thesis of *Concept* is that previous writers on Bábí history have neglected the concept of *jihád* (holy war) which, MacEoin affirms, is the key to understanding the Bábí attitudes and actions and thereby the essential nature of the events in question:

Both these views—'rebellion' on the one hand and 'self-defence' and 'persecution' on the other—obscure the more fundamental issue of the nature, status, and function of *jihád* within the Bábí movement, as derived from Islam, from the writings of the Báb, and from the expressed attitudes of the Bábí leadership in those localities where trouble broke out.<sup>12</sup>

MacEoin gives as reasons for the importance of *jihád* that 'it provides us with an important focus for the consideration of the Báb's attitude and the attitudes of his followers to Islam and to the Qájár state', that 'it enables us to carry out a reappraisal of the political and ethical issues involved in the struggles of Shaykh Ṭabarsí, Nayríz and Zanján' and finally that 'it leads us directly to one of the most central questions around which the development of Baha'ism out of Babism revolves, and clarifies for us what is perhaps the most distinctive feature of early Bahá'í doctrine'.<sup>13</sup>

The remainder of *Concept* consists in the presentation of a certain doctrine of holy war, attributed to the Báb and based on selected quotations from the Báb's writings, particularly his initial work, the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*,<sup>14</sup> (the commentary on the súrih of Joseph in the Qur'án), and an analysis of the above-mentioned historical incidents in the light of this doctrine.

There are a number of reasons for feeling that MacEoin's treatment of these events and issues is defective. He is highly selective in the material which he quotes from the Báb. Also, the Báb's later works and their import are considerably neglected. Moreover, throughout his rather long paper, MacEoin states, without argument or support, a number of judgements and interpretations which are open to serious question. Finally, there are several important inconsistencies and contradictions in MacEoin's presentation of his thesis. In our discussion below, we will deal with each of these questions.

Let us begin with consideration of a basic inconsistency which is fundamental to MacEoin's presentation of his thesis. In his initial presentation (quoted above) of the thesis that the concept of holy war is the key to understanding the Bábí-Muslim confrontations, MacEoin clearly rejects both the notion that the Bábís were politically motivated (the 'rebellion' interpretation) and the notion that their actions were essentially defensive, as explained by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, and other Bahá'í writers. Since MacEoin puts forth *jihád* as the proper answer, one would naturally expect him to present the Bábís as having engaged in an offensive military action justified by appropriate religious doctrines and motives. It is therefore surprising to read, in the conclusion to the paper, that in MacEoin's own judgement this is not the case:



In conclusion, then, we may note that in no instance do the Bábís seem to have declared offensive *jihád* along the lines suggested in the *Qayyúm al-asmá'*, probably because it was regarded as wrong to declare a holy war unless there was a reasonable chance of success—a condition clearly lacking in the case of the Bábís.<sup>15</sup>

How indeed can the notion of holy war be the key to understanding the Bábí-Muslim confrontations if in no instance it was involved in precipitating the conflicts? How can *jihád* explain to us 'the Báb's attitudes and the attitude of his followers to Islam and to the Qájár state'<sup>16</sup> if the only notion of *jihád* which MacEoin attributes to the Báb (that which MacEoin derives from his particular exegesis of the *Qayyumu'l-Asmá'*) was, in no instance, the basis of the Bábí actions?

Moreover, the only reason suggested by MacEoin to explain the Bábís' refusal to declare *jihád* against their Muslim opponents was the lack of a reasonable chance of success. Now, as we will see from our discussion below, *jihád* was never conditioned on calculating its success. By its very nature, holy war is based strictly on an intrinsic, moral justification, not an extrinsic, power-seeking one. Indeed, in characterizing the Bábí attitudes at Zanján, MacEoin has said: 'We can see the role played here, as at Shaykh Ṭabarsí, by religious fanaticism and a characteristically Shí'í fascination with martyrdom'.<sup>17</sup> Would people who are fanatically religious and fascinated with martyrdom be reluctant to declare a holy war because they calculate that there is no chance of success? Would they even make such a calculation?

Furthermore, no one disputes the fact that the Bábís did fight, and fight heroically, against incredible odds. Once it became evident to the Bábís that a fight was unavoidable and that their own deaths as martyrs were likely, what would they lose in declaring *jihád* if that was, as MacEoin contends, their basic attitude and motive?<sup>18</sup>

If we reject the *jihád* thesis as inconsistent with the known attitudes and actions of the Bábís as well as the teachings of the Báb, then how can we interpret what happened at Shaykh Ṭabarsí, Nayríz, and Zanján? MacEoin tells us that: 'Once battle was joined, religious motifs of martyrdom, defensive *jihád* and "perfecting the proof" (i.e. demonstrating the truth of the cause in the eyes of men) took precedence over social, economic, and other features.'<sup>19</sup> This is beginning to sound extremely close to Townshend's description of a defensive action in response to religious persecution. What, after all, is a 'defensive *jihád*' but a defensive action undertaken for religious motives? A defensive action is one taken in response to prior aggression on the part of others.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, in the end, MacEoin's analysis appears to support in its essentials the interpretation of these events given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, to render doubtful or at least highly suspect the *jihád* thesis, and to discredit



completely any view which ascribes political or power-seeking motives to the Bábís.

### THE NATURE OF THE BÁB'S CLAIMS

An essential aspect of the *jihád* thesis as presented in *Concept* is the notion that the Báb progressively changed the basic character of his claims during the evolution of his six-year ministry (from 1844 to 1850). Here is MacEoin's statement of the matter:

In its earliest phase (to 1848), Babism grew rapidly . . . as an expression of extreme Islamic pietism animated by urgent expectation of the return of the Hidden Imam in his messianic persona as the Imam Mahdí, Sayyid 'Alí Muḥammad being his agent or 'gate' (báb) on earth. In its brief second phase (1848-9), . . . the Báb . . . proclaimed himself the promised Mahdí in person. A third phase followed, initiated by the Báb's rapid assumption of the role of an independent prophet or divine 'manifestation' directly empowered by God to open a new religious dispensation after Islam, to reveal new scriptures and to ordain a new legal system.<sup>21</sup>

Neither the historical facts nor the Báb's writings justify this simplistic attempt to divide the Báb's ministry into strict, sequential periods, each period represented by a characteristic claim. For example, the Báb's claims both to be an independent Manifestation of God, the so-called third phase quoted above, as well as to be the promised Mahdí or Qá'im, are easily seen to be already expressed in his initial work, the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*, written in 1844. In this work, the Báb refers to himself and to his rank using terms which were understood and accepted by his Islamic audience as applicable only to an independent Manifestation of God.<sup>22</sup>

That the nature of the Báb's claims were perceived by those who read the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* is illustrated by an incident which shortly followed the Báb's initial declaration of his mission in May, 1844, and the composition of the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*. In order to understand the full significance of this incident, it will be necessary to summarize briefly some of the basic facts and events connected with the birth of the Bábí Faith.

In late 18th century 'Iráq and Irán, there began a reform movement within Twelver Shí'ih Islám known as *Shaykhism*, after its founder *Shaykh Aḥmad-i-Aḥsá'í*.<sup>23</sup> At that late stage in its history, Islám and the Islamic world had sunk into a state of extreme depravity and corruption. The world of Shí'ism was effectively ruled by the 'ulamá, the religious leaders. The brilliance of Islamic thought of the medieval period was replaced by a rigid orthodoxy and extreme fundamentalism. Moral degeneracy, bribery, and venality were rampant.<sup>24</sup> It was amidst such a sad state of affairs that *Shaykh Aḥmad* arose in an attempt to lead his fellow believers to a more subtle and spiritual concept of religion. He gave symbolic rather than literal



interpretations to many of the traditional Islamic beliefs and taught that the 'resurrection' of believers was to be spiritual and not bodily. At his death in 1826 he was succeeded by Siyyid Kázim-i-Rashí. The latter continued the doctrines of *Shaykh* Ahmad, but laid increasing emphasis on teaching the imminent advent of the Mahdí (Qá'im), the Promised One of *Shí'ih* Islám. So much was this so that, at his death in January, 1844, *Shaykhism* had been largely transformed into a movement of messianic adventism.

In January, 1844, Mullá Husayn-i-Bushrú'í, one of the chief disciples of the late Siyyid Kázim, set out to find the Promised One who, Siyyid Kázim had insisted, was now living in their very midst. His search led him to the city of Shíráz in southern Írán where, on 23 May, 1844, Siyyid 'Alí-Muhammad, the Báb, disclosed to Mullá Husayn that he was the one foretold in unmistakable terms by Siyyid Kázim. Mullá Husayn recognized in the Báb the various signs given by Siyyid Kázim and accepted the Báb as the Promised One. According to Mullá Husayn's account, the Báb began the composition of the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* in Mullá Husayn's presence at their very first meeting. Following the Báb's explicit instructions, Mullá Husayn refrained for the time being from teaching his new-found Faith.<sup>25</sup>

Within a number of weeks following the Báb's declaration of his mission to Mullá Husayn, sixteen other individuals also found their way to the Báb and accepted him as the Promised One. One other person, Táhirih, the only woman, also came to know of the Báb and accept him, but without meeting him. These eighteen disciples of the Báb were designated by him as 'Letters of the Living'. They were sent forth by the Báb throughout Persia and adjoining regions to teach his Faith. These events transpired during the Summer of 1844.<sup>26</sup>

One of the Letters of the Living (the second, in fact) was Mullá 'Alí-i-Bastámí. He, like Mullá Husayn, had been a leading member of the *Shaykhí* community. He was given the specific task by the Báb of returning to the region of Karbilá, the heartland of *Shaykhism*, and of proclaiming there the new Faith. He was not, however, to divulge the identity of the Báb, but only to proclaim that he had, in fact, appeared.

Arising to fulfill this task given him by the Báb, Mullá 'Alí arrived in 'Iráq in early August, 1844.<sup>27</sup> He immediately embarked on the mission of proclaiming the advent of the Báb. As a proof of the validity of the new revelation, he produced and circulated copies of the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*.<sup>28</sup>

The impact which this work of the Báb had on the population of 'Iráq was immediate and dramatic. The implications of the claims and teachings it contained, coupled with the fearless and public pronouncement of Mullá 'Alí-i-Bastámí, led to his arrest and eventual imprisonment in Baghdád. After some deliberations as to what should be done with him, the authorities, under the leadership of Najíb Páshá, convoked a conclave of Sunní and



Shī'ih ecclesiastics who tried Mullá 'Alí according to religious law. This trial took place in January, 1845.

The result of the trial was an edict or *fatwá*, which, among other things, condemned the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* as heretical and its unknown author as a heretic deserving of death. This edict was signed by every one of the mullás present at the trial. Mullá 'Alí was held to merit death and was remanded to prison. He disappeared from view and the exact conditions of his execution have remained unknown.<sup>29</sup>

Of particular interest for the present study are the contents of the *fatwá* document itself. For here we have a surely authenticated document of the reaction of the leaders of thought of the Islamic world to the initial writings and claims of the Báb. The *fatwá* lays the following specific charges against the Báb:

- (1) That he wrote a book that resembled the Qur'án in its format, with chapters, verses, etc.
- (2) That he took liberties with the text of the Qur'án by adding, subtracting and interposing new material.
- (3) That he claimed divine revelation.
- (4) That he exaggerated concerning some of the Holy Family.
- (5) That he exaggerated the importance of his own writings and commandments while de-emphasizing the importance of Islám and of Islamic religious law.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, based strictly on the text of the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* (for they had nothing else, not even the knowledge of the Báb's identity), the panel of Sunnī and Shī'ih 'ulamá unanimously declared that the Báb had claimed divine revelation. Let us mention a few of the passages of the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* from which the panel perceived the Báb's claim to divine revelation. These are passages that have been cited in the *fatwá* document itself in explicit support of the charge that the Báb claimed divine revelation.

In chapter 61, verse 22 of the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* we find: 'We have inspired you as We inspired Muḥammad and those messengers who were before him with clear signs in order that mankind may have no arguments against God. . . .'<sup>31</sup> Here, the Báb clearly identifies himself as a Messenger of God after Muḥammad, and of the same rank and nature. Later on (verse 24) the Báb refers to himself as the 'Remembrance' of God, a term unequivocally understood in this context as implying the rank of a Manifestation or Prophet of God.<sup>32</sup> In chapter 65, verse 2, the Báb speaks of the verses of the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* as 'revealed' (*awḥá*) by God.<sup>33</sup> In chapter 60, verse 14, the Báb speaks likewise of the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* as 'sent down' (*anzala*) by God.<sup>34</sup> Both of these terms are immediately perceived as constituting an unequivocal claim to divine revelation.

In chapter 60, verse 12, the Báb refers to himself as the Proof (*al-Hujja*), one of the titles of the Imám Mahdí.<sup>35</sup>



In chapter 62, verse 12, the Báb says: 'O people of the Earth! The Remembrance has come to you after a break in the succession of messengers in order that he may purge and purify you. . . .'<sup>36</sup> Not only does the Báb assume the title of Remembrance, but he specifically presents his revelation as following in the established succession of divine revelations.

The above is only a sampling, but should suffice to establish that, from the very beginning, the nature of the Báb's claims were quite clear and unequivocal.<sup>37</sup> If his claims were so clear to his enemies, and to the orthodox establishment of the day, they were certainly just as clear to his followers. What else indeed but the conviction that they were the believing witnesses to a divine epiphany could have motivated the early followers of the Báb (such as Mullá 'Alí-i-Bastámí himself) to such deeds of self-sacrifice?

Thus, the *fatwá* document, written and proclaimed in early 1845 and based strictly on the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* (or whatever portion of it the Báb had completed before early August, 1844), the trial of Mullá 'Alí-i-Bastámí which generated the *fatwá*, and the actions of both the early Bábís and their religious opponents all seem to contradict decisively MacEoin's description of the early Bábí Faith as 'an expression of extreme Islamic pietism animated by urgent expectation of the return of the Hidden Imam. . . .'<sup>38</sup>

However, there is no doubt a considerable change in style, tone, and content between the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*, written in 1844, and the Persian *Bayán*, written by the Báb in 1848. The former is more Qur'anic in style, and seeks to reaffirm the basic truths of Islám, much as Jesus said to the Jews that 'I have come not to destroy the Law but to fulfill it.' In particular, during the first few years of his ministry, the Báb did not institute laws different from those of Islám, and he explicitly enjoined his followers to continue observance of Islamic law.

On the other hand, the Persian *Bayán* represents a radical break with Islamic law, abrogating many traditional laws and instituting new ones. In one of his later writings, the *Seven Proofs*, the Báb refers to the evolutionary character of his revelation:

Consider the manifold favours vouchsafed by the Promised One, and the effusions of His bounty which have pervaded the concourse of the followers of Islám to enable them to attain unto salvation. Indeed observe how He Who representeth the origin of creation, He Who is the Exponent of the verse 'I, in very truth, am God', identified Himself as the Gate [Báb] for the advent of the promised Qá'im, a descendant of Muḥammad, and in His first Book enjoined the observance of the laws of the Qur'án, so that the people might not be seized with perturbation by reason of a new Book and a new Revelation and might regard His Faith as similar to their own, perchance they would not turn away from the Truth and ignore the thing for which they had been called into being.<sup>39</sup>

A few words of explanation concerning the above passage are in order. After the death of Muḥammad (632 A.D.), there followed a succession of



Imáms or leaders, the first being 'Alí the son-in-law of Muḥammad, the husband of Muḥammad's daughter Fatima. The legitimacy and spiritual authority of the Imáms is recognized by Shī'ih Islām but not by Sunnī Islām. Traditional Shī'ih belief holds that the twelfth and last Imám appeared in the tenth century and that he did not die but is only hidden and will, at the appropriate moment, return in eschatological consummation. This apocalyptic event is designated as the appearance of the Imám Mahdí, the Qá'im, the Promised One of Shī'ih Islām.

Each Imám had designated his successor, and it is believed that the twelfth and last Imám designated an intermediary or 'Gate' (Báb) to succeed him. Three other succeeding Gates were designated by their predecessors, and then the succession ceased. The Gates were not held to be Imáms but only representatives of the last (hidden) Imám. All of the Imáms were descended from 'Alí and from Muḥammad via Fatima. Thus, when 'Alí-Muḥammad of Shíráz took the title of Báb, he could easily have been interpreted to mean that he was yet another (fifth) Gate to the twelfth Imám, i.e., a 'Gate for the advent of the Promised Qá'im, a descendant of Muḥammad. . . .'<sup>40</sup> But this interpretation is rendered ambiguous by the Báb's unequivocal claims to independent divine revelation as discussed above. The obvious conclusion, then, is that, in the early period of his ministry, the Báb deliberately employed this ambiguity in order to lessen the impact of his otherwise clear claims to divine revelation.

However, this conclusion, though logical, does not explain what 'Alí-Muḥammad of Shíráz did in fact mean by the title of 'Báb'. What else could he have meant if not that he was the fifth Gate to the Hidden Imám?

To answer this important question, and to gain an adequate understanding of the nature of the Báb's claims, and of the evolution of his ministry, one other important feature of the Persian *Bayán* needs our attention. Not only does the *Bayán* promulgate a radically new set of rather severe laws, it speaks continually of a further Manifestation of God whose appearance is soon expected. The title given to this future Manifestation is 'Him Whom God shall make manifest' and He is addressed or mentioned over three hundred times in the Persian *Bayán*. Indeed, He Whom God shall make manifest is the very focal point of the *Bayán* in that the stated purpose of the *Bayán* and its laws is to prepare the followers of the Báb for the acceptance of this imminent epiphany. For example, the Báb affirms: 'And know thou of a certainty that every letter revealed in the Bayán is solely intended to evoke submission unto Him Whom God shall make manifest. . . .'<sup>41</sup>

The Báb likewise affirms that all of the laws of the *Bayán* are to stand only if they are confirmed and accepted by Him Whom God shall make manifest. For example: 'At the time of the appearance of Him Whom God shall make manifest, wert thou to perform thy deeds for the sake of the Point of the



Bayán, they would be regarded as performed for one other than God, inasmuch as on that Day the Point of the Bayán is none other than Him Whom God shall make manifest. . . .<sup>42</sup> and 'Thus, should the followers of the Bayán observe the precepts of Him Whom God shall make manifest at the time of His appearance. . . .'<sup>43</sup>

The Báb further makes clear that the revelation of Him Whom God shall make manifest is greater than the Báb's own revelation: 'I swear by the most holy Essence of God—exalted and glorified be He—that in the Day of the appearance of Him Whom God shall make manifest a thousand perusals of the Bayán cannot equal the perusal of a single verse to be revealed by Him Who God shall make manifest.'<sup>44</sup>

Thus, in the same book and at the same time that the Báb finally uses his full authority to establish the laws of his religious dispensation, he states that his system is to be short-lived and sharply focused. It is to prepare the way for the imminent advent of another, greater revelation.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, the true meaning of the title 'Báb' or 'gate' is that 'Alí-Muhammad considered himself to be the gate or forerunner of a second Manifestation of God:

The Báb declared Himself at the beginning of His mission to be the 'Báb' by which He meant to be the gate or forerunner of 'Him Whom God will make manifest', that is to say Bahá'u'lláh, Whose advent the Shí'ahs expected in the person of 'the return of the Imám Husayn'. The Sunnís also believe in a similar twofold manifestation, the first they call 'the Mihdí', the second 'the Return of Christ'. By the term Báb, the Báb meant to be the forerunner of the second manifestation rather than, as some have maintained, the gate of the Qá'im. When He declared Himself to be the Báb, the people understood by the term that He was an intermediary between the absent Qá'im and His followers, though He Himself never meant to be such a person. All He claimed to be was that He was the Qá'im Himself and in addition to this station, that of the Báb, namely the gate or forerunner of 'Him Whom God will make manifest'.<sup>46</sup>

Let us sum up: from the beginning of his ministry, the Báb laid claim to the station of the bearer of an independent divine revelation, thus of one having the authority to inaugurate a new religious dispensation and to proclaim new laws and principles. However, in the early period of his ministry, he used the term 'Gate' (Báb) in a deliberately ambiguous way in order to diminish somewhat the impact of his otherwise unequivocal claim to divine revelation. He also refrained, in the beginning, from using the full powers with which he felt himself invested to avoid giving an unnecessary shock to the Islamic recipients of his message, and to reaffirm the essentials of Islám and its laws. He was explicit in stating this principle of his mission. After a four-year period fraught with numerous events,<sup>47</sup> the Báb then wrote both the Arabic *Bayán* and the Persian *Bayán* in which he reiterated his claims to divine revelation and put forth an entirely new set of laws, abrogating those of Islám. At the same time, he stated clearly that the entire



purpose of his system and his cause was to prepare his followers for the recognition and acceptance of a further, greater Manifestation of God soon to come, clarifying thereby the true meaning of the title 'Báb'.<sup>48</sup>

### JIHÁD AND THE WRITINGS OF THE BÁB

The preceding discussion has already drawn attention to the fact that the doctrine of *jihád* which MacEoin attributes to the Báb is derived from the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*, the first work of the Báb. Furthermore, we have seen that for the first four years of his ministry (and in particular in the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*), the Báb strictly enjoined adherence to Qur'anic law. It is therefore clear that the doctrine of *jihád* in the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* is not the Báb's at all but is rather the Qur'anic doctrine which the Báb is simply reiterating in the same manner as he did with a number of Qur'anic laws in the course of the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*. That this is so is implicitly recognized by MacEoin:

The regulations governing the conduct of *jihád* are set out in a number of places in the *Qayyúmu'l-asmá'*, principally in *súras* 96 to 101. For the most part these consist, like a great many passages of the book (notably those dealing with legislation), of verbatim or near-verbatim reproductions of existing Quranic passages or echoes of such passages, with only occasionally novel features introduced by the Báb himself. . . . we shall attempt to outline the main features of the Báb's directions concerning *jihád*, with brief references in the notes to what seem to be the Quranic original, where appropriate.<sup>49</sup>

Thus, the passages of the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* referring to *jihád* do not constitute a Bábí doctrine of *jihád* but simply a restatement in almost identical terms of the Qur'anic doctrine.<sup>50</sup> In fact, the Báb's treatment of *jihád* in the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* really amounts to a first step towards a restriction of the Islamic law of *jihád* as conceived at the time of the Báb, for the Báb clearly made the waging of *jihád* contingent on his orders, whereas Shí'ih tradition had developed a number of special cases which allowed for *jihád* to be waged in more general circumstances. By making *jihád* conditional on his approval, and by withholding that approval (as the Báb did), he effectively abrogated the waging of *jihád*, but without explicitly denying the Qur'anic doctrine of holy war.<sup>51</sup>

Yet another point should be stressed here. The Qur'anic doctrine made holy war legitimate only against unbelievers, i.e., non-Muslims. Since the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* strictly enjoins obedience to Qur'anic law, the references to *jihád* in the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* could not have been taken or understood by the Báb's followers as legitimizing a holy war against their fellow Muslims. But it is with these very Muslims that the Bábis eventually had their bloody encounters. This, again, suggests strongly that the *jihád* doctrine of the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* cannot be an explanation for or a key to the understanding of these encounters.



If we turn, now, to a consideration of the Persian *Bayán*, the book which contains the new laws of the Bábí dispensation, we find that there is no *jihád* doctrine whatever. In fact, the word *jihád* appears only twice in the entire corpus of the Persian *Bayán*, both of them being incidental references.<sup>52</sup> Of course, the *Bayán* does not specifically abolish the Qur'anic law of *jihád* either. It could therefore be legitimately presumed that the *jihád* of the Qur'an was still permissible to the Bábís (contingent, of course, on the Báb's explicit order). On the other hand, let us recall that the whole focus of the Persian *Bayán* was the imminent advent of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', and that the Báb made all of his laws conditional on their acceptance by the second Manifestation. Since Bahá'u'lláh abrogated the law of *jihád*, we can again see in the Báb's handling of the question of holy war in the *Bayán* a step in the direction towards its abrogation.

In any case, the fact is that the Persian *Bayán* institutes a number of very severe laws, but the law of *jihád* is not one of them. The very most that the Báb's followers could have drawn from this was that the Báb tacitly approved the Qur'anic law already accepted, but with the condition that only the Báb could declare holy war.<sup>53</sup>

#### SHAYKH TABARSÍ, NAYRÍZ, ZANJÁN

After the composition of the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*, the Báb proceeded, in the Fall of 1844, to go on pilgrimage to Mecca. There he openly proclaimed his Cause to the Sharíf of Mecca and to the assembled pilgrims.<sup>54</sup> At the same time, the teaching activities of his disciples in Persia served to spread knowledge of the new Faith to the whole country. Upon his return from pilgrimage in the Spring of 1845, the Báb was immediately arrested by the Governor of the Province of Fárs and maintained under house arrest in his native city of Shíráz. After the Báb and his followers suffered many indignities and persecutions at the hands of the Governor, the Báb moved to Isfáhán in September, 1846.

In the Spring of 1847, the Grand Vazír Hájí Mírzá Áqásí, an implacable enemy of the Báb, ordered his incarceration in the castle of Máh-Kú in the North of Írán. In April, 1848, the Báb was subsequently moved to yet another prison, at Chihríq, in the same general area as Máh-Kú. In July of the same year, he was brought to Tabríz for a religious trial before an assembly of Shí'ih ecclesiastics. There he boldly and publicly proclaimed himself as the awaited Qá'im in language which was unequivocally clear to all.

At this point, interest in the Báb and his Faith was at a fever pitch in Írán, and the hostility of certain fanatical elements of the clergy and of the government was thereby heightened as well. Shoghi Effendi describes the situation in Írán immediately following the Báb's trial and public declaration in Tabríz:



The formal assumption by the Báb of the authority of the promised Qá'im, in such dramatic circumstances and in so challenging a tone, before a distinguished gathering of eminent Shí'ah ecclesiastics, powerful, jealous, alarmed and hostile, was the explosive force that loosed a veritable avalanche of calamities which swept down upon the Faith and the people among whom it was born. It raised to fervid heat the zeal that glowed in the souls of the Báb's scattered disciples, who were already incensed by the cruel captivity of their Leader, and whose ardor was now further inflamed by the outpourings of His pen which reached them unceasingly from the place of His confinement. It provoked a heated and prolonged controversy throughout the length and breadth of the land, in bazaars, masjids, madrisihs and other public places, deepening thereby the cleavage that had already sundered its people.<sup>55</sup>

Only two months later, Muḥammad Sháh died, and seventeen-year-old Násiri'd-Dín Mírzá, who had been present at the Báb's trial in Tabríz, became Sháh of Persia. The new Sháh's chief minister, Mírzá Taqí-Khán, immediately instigated a systematic campaign against the Bábís:

Mírzá Taqí Khán . . . decreed that immediate and condign punishment be inflicted on the hapless Bábís. Governors, magistrates and civil servants, throughout the provinces, instigated by the monstrous campaign of vilification conducted by the clergy, and prompted by their lust for pecuniary rewards, vied in their respective spheres with each other in hounding and heaping indignities on the adherents of the outlawed Faith. For the first time in the Faith's history a systematic campaign in which the civil and ecclesiastical powers were banded together was being launched against it. . . .<sup>56</sup>

This campaign of terror and repression culminated in the Báb's execution by government decree two years later in Tabríz on 9 July, 1850.

It was in such an atmosphere of terror and repression that there occurred, on three separate occasions, major confrontations between Bábís and Muslims. Let us sketch briefly the basic facts of each of these events.

In mid-July, 1848, a group of Bábís encamped on the outskirts of the village of Niyálá was suddenly attacked by some of the townspeople. The Bábís dispersed in different directions. Quddús, one of the Letters of the Living, was forcibly detained and held under house arrest in the home of Mírzá Muḥammad-Taqí, the leading ecclesiastic of the town of Sárí in the province of Mázindarán. Táhirih, the courageous female Letter of the Living, was also arrested and held in Tíhrán under the authority of the Mayor, Maḥmúd Khán. Many of the scattered Bábís regrouped near Mashhad under the leadership of Mullá Ḥusayn, the first Letter of the Living, who had received instructions from the Báb to come to the aid of Quddús.

In their march towards Sárí, the group of Bábís, which numbered several hundred, camped near the town of Bárfurúsh. Sa'idu'l-'Ulamá, the leading divine of Bárfurúsh, preached vehemently against the Bábís and incited the



townspeople to attack them with an array of weapons including guns and ammunition. The Bábís, armed primarily with swords alone, defended themselves and succeeded in dispersing the attack.<sup>57</sup> As a result, the townspeople asked for a truce, but begged Mullá Ḥusayn to leave the area to avoid further unrest. One of the leaders offered an escort of horsemen to guide Mullá Ḥusayn and the Bábís through the forest of Mázindarán, giving a solemn oath on the Qur'án that they would not be molested.

However, Sa'idu'l-'Ulamá succeeded in corrupting the leader of the escort, Khusraw-i-Qádí-Kalá'í, by assuring him that he, Sa'idu'l-'Ulamá, would assume before God the moral responsibility for Khusraw's actions if the Bábís were all slain in the forest. The treacherous attack did take place, but again the Bábís were able to repulse the adversary, though not without loss of life on both sides.

Following the incident, and some subsequent attacks on the Bábí camp by other villagers, Mullá Ḥusayn led his group to the Shrine of Shaykh Ṭabarsí in the forest of Mázindarán. There they built fortifications and stored food. Though this was a purely defensive position far from any village or urban centre, nevertheless, the government and clergy sent wave after wave of heavily armed troops to reduce the Bábís, who fought with swords and a few muskets against heavy artillery. The siege of Shaykh Ṭabarsí lasted seven months, from October, 1848, to May, 1849. It was ended only by trickery in which the leader of the government forces swore a signed oath on the Qur'án that the Bábís would not be molested if they ceased resistance. Though suspecting the insincerity of the pledge, the Bábís complied to show their good faith and their lack of any motive other than pure self-defence. Upon acceding to this request, they were nevertheless immediately set upon by the soldiers who had been unable to defeat them. Most were brutally killed, but a few escaped and survived to tell the details of what had transpired.<sup>58</sup> Such, in its briefest outline, are the well established facts of the Shaykh Ṭabarsí upheaval.

The incident at Nayríz took place during the months of May and June, 1850. The key figure is Vahíd, who had been sent by Muḥammad Sháh in 1845 to ascertain the validity of the Báb's claims on behalf of the Sháh. The result of Vahíd's encounter with the Báb was that Vahíd became himself a Bábí. In May, 1850, Vahíd returned to the town of Nayríz in his native province of Fárs where he was enthusiastically greeted by his friends and relatives. The Governor of Nayríz immediately set out to arrest Vahíd, hiring a thousand trained soldiers who were to accomplish this task. Vahíd escaped with about seventy of his friends and took refuge in an abandoned fort on the outskirts of the town. As at Shaykh Ṭabarsí, the vastly superior government force was unable to defeat the small band, armed primarily with swords. After a month, the leader of the government forces offered a truce to induce Vahíd to



leave the fort and meet with him. This was followed a few days later by the treacherous slaughter of Vahíd and his companions. This was the Nayríz incident.

Finally, at Zanján, in the North of Persia, a considerable segment of the population had become followers of the Báb, primarily through the remarkable teaching efforts of one Hujjat. In May, 1850, the Governor of Zanján decreed that the town be separated into two distinct quarters, Bábís on the one hand and non-Bábís on the other. Every single member of the city had to decide to which group he belonged. After the separation took place, there were about three thousand inhabitants, men, women and children, in the Bábí sector under the leadership of Hujjat. The Bábís took refuge in a nearby fort. A nine-month siege then followed in which again vastly superior forces were unable to reduce the Bábís. As in the other two incidents, a pledge of peace and safe conduct was made on a copy of the Qur'án. Hujjat responded by sending a small delegation of old men and young children. This delegation was cruelly mistreated, making the true intentions of the government forces clear to all. There followed yet another month of siege in which the Bábí force was finally reduced to less than two hundred able-bodied men. At that point, the Bábís had no other choice than to capitulate, after which most of those who remained were slaughtered.

There were, however, survivors both from Nayríz and Zanján who were able to verify the details of what transpired during these incidents.

These are the three main incidents which *Concept* seeks to explain on the basis of *jihád*. Of course, we have already seen that, in the concluding portion of his article, Denis MacEoin is constrained to admit that the Bábís never declared holy war on their adversaries. He characterizes each of the conflicts as a 'defensive *jihád*', i.e., a defense undertaken for primarily religious rather than political or social motives. However, MacEoin does level against the Bábís the charge of militant provocation, thus laying upon them the indirect blame for initiating these bloody confrontations:

... their refusal to recognize existing ecclesiastical and secular authority, their carrying of arms in situations of considerable political instability, and their generally aggressive manner resulted in clashes between them and the civilian population which quickly escalated into full-scale struggles.<sup>59</sup>

This passage summarizes the various charges against the Bábís which MacEoin makes throughout his article. Let us examine each of them briefly.

The Báb never taught the destruction of any political regime, nor did he seek in any way to subvert the secular or political authority of the existing state. His followers likewise proclaimed in word and deed their acceptance of and respect for established legal authority. In none of the above three confrontations were the Bábís initially charged by their persecutors with



violation of local or state laws or of otherwise attempting to subvert government authority.<sup>60</sup> It is difficult, therefore, to see how any supposed Bábí rebelliousness towards secular authority could be construed as the cause of these incidents.

As to their attitude towards religious authority, it is clear that the Bábís regarded the 'ulamá as corrupt, and that the Bábís openly taught their Faith to others and sought converts among the Muslim population. It was clearly their notable success in converting considerable numbers of the populace in various corners of the land that angered the clergy and incited them to rise up against the Bábís. However, the Bábís never sought to restrict the right of convinced Muslims to practice their own religious laws in their own way. They sought only to have, for themselves, the same right, and it was this right that was denied them by their persecutors.

Regarding the 'carrying of arms in situations of considerable political instability': the 'political instability' referred to here is just a euphemism for the reign of terror that was directed against the Bábís. That they bore arms in their own defense can hardly be conceived as the *cause* of the *pre-existing* 'political instability', i.e. of the terror being directed towards them.

Finally, regarding their 'generally aggressive manner': It is true that the Bábís were, in many instances, quite fearless in teaching their Faith and quite fiery in supporting, through arguments, prophecies, and traditions, its truth. One can quite imagine, for example, the discomfiture felt by arrogant and self-righteous mullás who were unable to defeat in argument such a one as Táhírih, a woman. But what is clear beyond any doubt is the Bábís' consistent refusal to declare holy war or engage in aggressive acts.<sup>61</sup> For example, Quddús, who was delivered from his confinement in Sári, who participated in the siege of Shaykh Ṭabarsí, and who was among the survivors martyred after the surrender, made this point very clear in the following statement:

Never since our occupation of this fort . . . have we under any circumstances attempted to direct any offensive against our opponents. Not until they unchained their attack upon us did we arise to defend our lives. Had we cherished the ambition of waging holy war against them, had we harboured the least intention of achieving ascendancy through the power of our arms over the unbelievers, we should not, until this day, have remained besieged within these walls.<sup>62</sup>

Moreover, let us observe how far we have now come from the *jihád* thesis of *Concept* which holds that 'Bábí *jihád*' is the key to understanding the conflicts of Shaykh Ṭabarsí, Nayríz, and Zanján. Having concluded, with MacEoin, that the Bábís never declared *jihád*, we are now considering whether or not the Bábís' forthright teaching of their Faith to their fellow countrymen (what MacEoin calls their 'generally aggressive manner') is the



genesis of the persecutions which rained down upon them, a different question entirely.

Had the Bábís not been so successful in converting large numbers of their countrymen to the Báb's Faith, the conflicts of Shaykh Tabarsí, Nayríz, and Zanján could never have taken place, because there would have been essentially no one for the fanatical elements of the 'ulamá and the government to persecute. But this cannot obscure the fact that the instigators and aggressors in each of these upheavals were those who arose to persecute the Bábís, and not the Bábís themselves.

### CONCLUSIONS

We have now examined a number of reasons why the *jihád* thesis of *Concept* is defective. In particular, we have seen that MacEoin's exegesis of the Báb's writings neglects the claims to divine revelation contained in the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*, characterizes as a Bábí doctrine what is clearly the Qur'ánic one, attributes to the Persian *Bayán* a doctrine of *jihád* which that book in no wise contains, and systematically omits the central focus of the *Bayán*, namely 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'. Moreover, his interpretations of events neglect the repeated statements and actions of leading Bábís which clearly indicate their refusal to declare holy war against their Muslim opponents. Though forced to conclude that the Bábís never did, in fact, declare *jihád*, MacEoin nevertheless seeks to blame the Bábís for the persecutions they endured by attributing such persecution to a more general kind of militancy on their part.

In our refutation of these points, the present authors do not mean to imply that no excesses or faults were ever committed by Bábís. Indeed, Nabíl's narrative mentions several instances of such reprehensible actions on the part of Bábís. Moreover, in 1852, two Bábís, deranged with grief over the martyrdom of the Báb, attempted to kill Násiri'd-Dín Sháh with a pistol loaded with birdshot. This attempt on the Sháh's life is recounted in detail in all histories of the Bábí Faith, and it is clearly regarded as a vengeful act and therefore morally unjustified. However, it is again interesting to observe the reaction of the state authorities to this crime.

Rather than punish only the assailants (who were immediately captured), the government used the incident as a pretext for a nation-wide campaign of indiscriminate slaughter of Bábís even in the remotest corner of the land. In the government's own account of its actions we find, among other things:

Amongst the Bábís who have fallen into the hands of justice, there are six whose culpability not having been well established have been condemned to the galleys for life.<sup>63</sup>

In other words, those who had not the remotest connection with the crime



even in the eyes of the authorities were nonetheless condemned to life in prison. Two Western observers of these events, both non-Bahá'ís, have commented on the government account from which the above statement was drawn:

The account, coming from an enemy of the Bábís, tries to show them at their worst, but its naïve admissions only serve to bring out the high ideals and heroism of the Bábí martyrs, and the cold cruelty and bigotry of their persecutors. The article convicts its authors.<sup>64</sup>

As we are, even in our times, reliving in Írán some of the same horror, the same self-convicting 'cold cruelty and bigotry', we can see that the need for accurate, fair-minded and balanced scholarship of the history of the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths continues to make itself acutely felt.

#### NOTES

- 1 Denis MacEoin, 'Oriental Scholarship and the Bahá'í Faith, *World Order*, 8: 4 (1974), pp. 9-21.
- 2 H. M. Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Browne and the Bahá'í Faith*, George Ronald, Oxford 1970.
- 3 Nabíl-i-A'zam, *The Dawn-Breakers*, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois 1932 trans. Shoghi Effendi.
- 4 *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater, 1: 1, pp. 103-104.
- 5 Haghghatpejooh, "An Answer to the Misunderstandings and Misrepresentations in the Article in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* on the Teachings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", *Andalib*, 2: 5 (1983), pp. 27-41.
- 6 Since MacEoin knows both Persian and Arabic, his ignorance of these works of Bahá'u'lláh cannot be related to the fact that some of them have not yet been translated into Western languages. Indeed, even though the works of Bahá'u'lláh currently published in English comprise about two thousand pages, there are at least forty thousand manuscript pages of his writings which have not yet been translated or published in any Western language.
- 7 Denis MacEoin, 'The Bábí Concept of Holy War', *Religion*, 12 (1982), pp. 93-129.
- 8 Denis MacEoin, *Religion*, 12 (1982), pp. 405-408.
- 9 Moojan Momen (ed.), *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions, 1844-1944. Some Contemporary Western Accounts*, George Ronald, Oxford 1981. Henceforth referred to as Momen 1981.
- 10 It is interesting to note that this collaboration would certainly not have taken place were it not for the most unfortunate recent outbreak of extreme persecution of the Bahá'í Faith in Írán which has led to the exodus of a number of intellectuals to the West. Perhaps, then, the tragic events in Írán will lead ultimately to a number of fruitful scholarly endeavours in Bahá'í studies. It is the hope and prayer of the present writers that our effort will contribute in some small measure to such a consummation.
- 11 Introduction to *The Dawn-Breakers*, op. cit., p. xxxiv.
- 12 *Concept*, p. 94



- 13 *Ibid.* It is curious that MacEoin, writing for a general audience, never states here or elsewhere in the article just what this 'most distinctive feature of early Bahá'í doctrine' is. Presumably he is alluding to Bahá'u'lláh's clear and unequivocal teachings that his followers not become involved in political movements and power struggles, as well as his firm injunction that 'it is better to be killed than to kill'. (Cf. *The Dawn-Breakers*, op. cit., p. xxxv.) 31
- 14 The *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* was written by the Báb in 1844. (Cf. *ibid.*, p. 61.) 32
- 15 *Concept*, p. 121. 33
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 94. 34
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 120. 35
- 18 That such was not their attitude is attested by numerous eyewitness accounts. For example. Vahíd, the leader of the Bábís at Nayríz, said to his fellow Bábís regarding their Muslim opponents: 'This very sword that lies before me . . . was given me by the Qá'im Himself. God knows, had I been authorised by Him to wage holy warfare against this people, I would, alone and unaided, have annihilated their forces. I am, however, commended to refrain from such an act.' (Cf. *The Dawn-Breakers*, op. cit., p. 469.) 36
- 19 *Concept*, p. 121. 37
- 20 In our discussion below, we will attempt to see how the references to *jihád* in the writings of the Báb can be interpreted in a way which is consistent with the attitudes and actions of his followers. 38
- 21 *Concept* p. 93. 39
- 22 Some of these terms are: Remembrance, Remembrance of God, Greatest Remembrance, the Gate of God, the Word, the Mighty Word, Qá'im of the (year) One Thousand, Cupbearer at God's Bidding, the Blessed Tree in Sinai, the Greatest Hour, the Resurrection, the Promised One, the Awaited Qá'im, the Greatest Announcement, the Greatest Sign, One Who Warns, etc. It is perhaps unnecessary to engage a detailed discussion of the background of each of these names and titles, but a few of them are treated in more detail in our discussion below. 40
- 23 Our main source for this is Nabíl-i-A'zam, op. cit.. Momen 1981 is also a useful reference, as well as Moojan Momen, "The Trial of Mullá 'Alí Bastámí: A Combined Sunní-Shí'í Fatwá against the Báb", *Journal of Persian Studies*, 20 (1982), pp. 112-132. Henceforth, the latter will be referred to as Momen 1982. 41
- 24 Concerning the conditions of the Muslim world of the period see Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, 2 vols., Longmans, Green and Co., London 1892. Cf. also A.-L.-M. Nicholas, *Seyyèd Ali Mohammed dit le Báb*, Dujarric & Cie., Paris 1905. 42
- 25 Nabíl-i-A'zam, op. cit., pp. 52-65. 43
- 26 *Ibid.*, pp. 66-69, 80-96. Also, Momen 1982 and H. Balyuzi, *The Báb*, George Ronald, Oxford 1973. 44
- 27 Momen 1982, p. 116. 45
- 28 According to Muslim theology and belief, the most tangible proof of divine revelation is the capacity of the Revelator to produce 'revealed verses' or 'revealed writing'. The main characteristics of revealed writing are held to be: the profundity and depth of the writing, the literary style and poetic quality of the writing, the manner of writing (spontaneous and uninterrupted), and the capacity to reveal writing under all conditions and circumstances. 46
- 29 Balyuzi, *The Báb*, op. cit. and Momen 1982. 47
- 30 Momen 1982, p. 119. 48



- 31 Ibid., p. 120.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid., p. 124.
- 34 Ibid., p. 121.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid., p. 122.
- 37 The reader interested in pursuing the subject can consult Momen 1982 where numerous further examples and passages from the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* are given, all contained in the *fatwá* document.
- 38 *Concept*, p. 93, see note 21.
- 39 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, compiled by the Universal House of Justice, Bahá'í World Centre, Haifa 1976, p. 119.
- 40 The Báb was a blood descendant of Muḥammad.
- 41 The *Bayán* is divided into books ('units') and chapters. The present passage is from book V, chapter 8. The present translation is that of *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, op. cit., p. 104.
- 42 Persian *Bayán*, VII, 2. *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, op. cit., p. 95.
- 43 Ibid., VIII, 1. Ibid., p. 97.
- 44 Ibid., V, 8. Ibid., p. 104.
- 45 Part of the preparation for Him Whom God shall make manifest was the severity of the laws of the Báb, making a strong break with Shí'ih Islám. Shoghi Effendi has commented on this in the following terms: '... The severe laws and injunctions revealed by the Báb can be properly appreciated and understood only when interpreted in the light of His own statement regarding the nature, purpose and character of His own Dispensation. As these statements clearly reveal, the Bábí Dispensation was essentially in the nature of a religious and indeed social revolution, and its duration had therefore to be short, but full of tragic events, of sweeping and drastic reforms. These drastic measures enforced by the Báb and His followers were taken with the view of undermining the very foundations of Shia'h [sic] orthodoxy, and thus paving the way for the coming of Bahá'u'lláh. To assert the independence of the new Dispensation, and to prepare also the ground for the approaching Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh the Báb had therefore to reveal very severe laws, even though most of them were never enforced. But the mere fact that He revealed them was in itself proof of the independent character of His Dispensation and was sufficient to create such widespread agitation, and excite such opposition on the part of the clergy that led them to cause His eventual martyrdom.' (Shoghi Effendi's secretary on his behalf, *Dawn of a New Day*, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, New Delhi 1970, pp. 77-8.) Thus, the Báb's ministry had the two-fold function of establishing an independent religious system (but of short duration) and of serving as a preparation for a further, greater Manifestation of God. Bahá'í literature often refers to this 'dual' or 'two-fold' station of the Báb.
- 46 Shoghi Effendi's secretary on his behalf, in *Unfolding Destiny. The Messages from the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith to the Bahá'ís of the British Isles*, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, London 1981, p. 426.
- 47 Detailed consideration of these events is outside the scope of this paper. The interested reader can consult the basic source of Nabíl, op. cit.
- 48 In *Concept*, MacEoin has systematically avoided consideration of the central role played in the Persian *Bayán* by Him Whom God shall make manifest. He makes only one casual, passing reference to a '... messianic figure whose advent at a



distant date the Báb alluded to' (*Concept*, p. 108). Such systematic omission of the very focal point and central concern of the *Bayán* constitutes a gross distortion and misrepresentation of the Báb's teachings. Moreover, even this one reference contains the gratuitous assertion that the future Manifestation was expected 'at a distant date', contrary to the clear indications in the Báb's writings that the advent of this Manifestation was imminent.

49 *Concept*, p. 103.

50 In this connection, it is interesting to note that the *fatwá* document, which condemns the author of the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* as a heretic, and which does not hesitate to mention every deviation from orthodox Islám, however slight, that the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* contains, makes no reference whatever to *jihád*. Thus, the *jihád* doctrine of the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* was tacitly recognized by the Sunní and Shí'ih ecclesiastics as thoroughly Qur'ánic.

51 We have already seen in the previous section why the Báb had decided, in the early stages of his ministry, not to promulgate explicitly any new laws. Thus, any restrictions or modifications of Islamic law had to remain implicit for the time being.

52 For example, in chapter VII, book 6, the Báb says: 'It is forbidden to carry arms of any sort except in case of an emergency or if a *jihád* has been declared.' Here again we can see that the law of the Báb tends toward a restriction of currently-accepted practice, rather than any incitement to wage war. Although *jihád* is mentioned as a possible exception to the prohibition against bearing arms, there is clearly no implication whatever that a *jihád* will be declared or must be declared, *jihád* being contingent on the command of the Báb alone.

53 In *Concept* MacEoin is at pains to extract somehow a *jihád* doctrine from the Persian *Bayán*. He begins by admitting that there is no explicit injunction to wage *jihád* in the Persian *Bayán*. He then continues: 'Nevertheless, several passages exist which rest on the assumption that *jihád* may be waged, while others command it in a form very different to that of the Quranic injunctions.' (*Concept*, p. 107.) What this 'very different' form of *jihád* turns out to be is simply the injunction to teach the Bábi Faith to others. For example, MacEoin quotes (*Concept*, p. 108) from book V, chapter 5 of the *Bayán* which states, among other things, that the kings and leaders of the earth should not wait for people to enter the Faith of the Báb spontaneously, but should actively teach the Faith to others and lead them to belief in it. This is not just a 'very different' form of *jihád*; it is not *jihád* at all. In attempting to interpret such injunctions to teach the Faith to others as incitements to *jihád*, MacEoin betrays here just how difficult the defense of the central thesis of his paper has become.

54 H. Balyuzi, *The Báb*, pp. 69-75.

55 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois 1957, pp. 35-36.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

57 It was during this encounter that Mullá Ḥusayn accomplished the often-told and thoroughly-authenticated feat of dispatching an adversary in one blow of his sword, cutting in two the man, his musket, and the tree behind which he had retreated. The feat was confirmed by enemies as well as Bábis. When the Grand Vazír chastized the Prince Mihdí-Qulí Mírzá for his inability to defeat the Bábis at *Shaykh* Tabarsí, the Prince sent him pieces of the musket-barrel smashed by the sword of Mullá Ḥusayn, saying: 'Such is the contemptible strength of the



- adversary who, with a single stroke of his sword, has shattered into six pieces the tree, the musket, and its holder.' (Cf., Nabíl., op. cit., p. 332.)
- 58 Nabíl, op. cit., contains the names of some of the survivors and even a photograph of one of them.
- 59 *Concept*, p. 121.
- 60 Once the sieges were under way, the authorities, in their desperate attempt to justify their actions, did misrepresent the Bábí defensive actions as rebellious and subversive in nature. But even then they were not able to make a case based on specific charges of documented violations of legally constituted authority.
- 61 On page 117 of *Concept*, speaking of the defenders of Shaykh Tabarsí, MacEoin accuses the Bábís of '... showing great brutality not only to the hostile soldiery but to civilians in the region as well.' This undocumented and unsupported accusation by MacEoin is particularly gratuitous and unscholarly. There are in fact a number of such summary, unsupported judgements throughout the paper.
- 62 Nabíl, op. cit., p. 396.
- 63 From the official government gazette, the *Rúznámiy-i-Vaqáyi'-i-Ittifaqíyyih*, quoted in Momen 1981, p. 141.
- 64 Quoted in Momen 1981, p. 139.

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# IS KARMAYOGA A DIRECT AND INDEPENDENT MEANS TO MOKSHA?

## AN EVALUATION OF VIVEKANANDA'S ARGUMENTS

**Anantanand Rambachan**

Swami Vivekananda is undoubtedly one of the most outstanding and influential figures in the recent history of Hinduism. Vivekananda's influence is so pervasive that it is a difficult and almost impossible task separately to identify and extricate the elements which he contributed to the contemporary understanding of Hinduism. Not only did he largely formulate this interpretation, but he also gave it the language in which it is articulated. There is very little in modern Hindu, particularly *Vedānta* apologetic writing, which does not carry the clear imprint of Vivekananda's influence. The fact that Vivekananda was a representative of the system of *Advaita* did not weaken the impression which he made on the whole of Hinduism. Because *Advaita*, through Vivekananda, was the first system to be so elaborately presented to the West, its comprehension has considerably shaped the approach to Hinduism in India and abroad. This was fostered by Vivekananda's vision and presentation of *Advaita* as the culmination of all Hindu religious thought. From his basis in *Advaita*, he generalized in his lectures and writings about the nature and features of Hinduism as a whole. In his own time he was represented and perceived as the spokesman and champion of Hinduism and not of any specific tradition within it.

In spite of Vivekananda's acknowledged impact and influence, but paradoxically, perhaps, because of it, the Hindu tradition is yet to assess critically the nature of this impact. More than eighty years after his death, the general attitude towards Vivekananda is still the understandable response of adulation with which he was first greeted after his return to India from the West. It seems as if the memory of the genuine pride and self-respect which Vivekananda instilled in Hindus still precludes critical evaluation of his contribution. It is this widespread impact, however, which makes a more objective appraisal necessary.



The thesis that the *yogas* of *karma* (work), *bhakti* (worship), and *jñāna* (knowledge) were independent and direct paths for the attainment of spiritual freedom (*moksha*) was employed by Vivekananda to demonstrate the superiority of Hinduism in its capacity to cater for different spiritual needs and temperaments. He wished to highlight what he saw as the liberal and universal claims of Hinduism and to contrast this with the exclusivism, particularly of Christianity. Today, like so many of Vivekananda's interpretations, it has become a standard argument in Hindu apologetic writings and even in scholarly studies written by both Hindus and non-Hindus. In this study, an attempt is made to clarify Vivekananda's understanding of *karmayoga* and to critically assess and evaluate his arguments for *karmayoga* as a direct and independent means to *moksha*. Our evaluation of Vivekananda's arguments is in relation to the fundamental propositions of the *Advaita* tradition to which he professes his allegiance. This method would have been objectionable if it consisted of applying to Vivekananda a set of criteria and standards of judgement, Hindu or non-Hindu, with entirely different presuppositions. This is a definite problem, for example, when the norms and premises of one religious tradition are employed, consciously or unconsciously, in considering another tradition. In this case, however, our criteria are grounded in the presuppositions of the *Advaita* tradition to which Vivekananda belongs. This study also seeks to highlight certain very important and unacknowledged differences between Shankara and Vivekananda in their respective understanding of *karmayoga* and its relationship to the attainment of *moksha*.

It is useful to begin by drawing attention to the agreement between Shankara and Vivekananda on the nature of the fundamental problem of *avidyā* (ignorance) and its resolution. It is only from this perspective that we can reasonably and justly evaluate Vivekananda's arguments for *karmayoga* as an independent way of accomplishing freedom. He concurs with Shankara on *avidyā* as the basic human problem and the source of all misery and evil.<sup>1</sup> Like Shankara, he presents the primary manifestation of this ignorance as the erroneous identification of the Self (*ātman*) with the body. It is the assumption of the limitless Self to be limited.<sup>2</sup> Vivekananda follows Shankara in presenting *avidyā* in the light of *adhyāsa* (superimposition), and illustrates it by using Shankara's vivid crystal-ball analogy.<sup>3</sup> Like a crystal-ball near a red or blue flower the *ātman* appears to be impure or limited only by association. It is never so in reality.<sup>4</sup> Bondage is therefore, for Vivekananda, only the thought of being bound and knowledge alone can confer freedom. Liberty involves nothing more than the destruction of ignorance and it is this knowledge which is the goal of human endeavour.

In agreement with Shankara, Vivekananda repeatedly asserts that *moksha* is not to be conceived as a new attainment. It is a matter of knowing or not



knowing.<sup>5</sup> Whereas Shankara often uses the story of the fictitious loss of the tenth man by drowning, Vivekananda employs a similar analogy to illustrate a notional loss through ignorance and a gain by knowledge. He frequently tells the story of a pregnant lioness who, in search of prey, died while in pursuit of a flock of sheep. She gave birth to a cub who lived with the flock and thought of herself as a lamb. It ate grass and bleated. An astonished lion noticed this sheep-lion in the midst of the flock, but could never get close because it always fled in fear. One day, however, he managed to isolate the sheep-lion and tried to convince it of its true identity. Not surprisingly, it refused to accept its true and original nature. As a last resort, the elderly lion took it to a nearby lake and pointed out the identity of their reflections. It immediately owned its original nature as a lion.

For both Shankara and Vivekananda, the content of the knowledge which frees is the understanding of the limitless and unbound nature of the *ātman*. For Shankara, this truth is the central theme of the *Upanishads*, and, for Vivekananda, it is the progressive culmination of the teachings of these texts. Vivekananda, however, does not identify liberating knowledge with what is gathered from exegetical analysis of the *Upanishads*. He is derisive about this knowledge and sees it as second hand information which is, at best, only provisionally valid. The claims of the *Upanishads* must, in his view, be again directly discovered in the way in which he feels that they were originally apprehended by the authors of these texts. For the attainment of this knowledge as he conceives it, Vivekananda proposes the *yogas* of *karma*, *bhakti* and *jñāna*. He unequivocally affirms that the aim of these is the removal of ignorance.

There is no becoming with the Absolute. It is ever free, ever perfect; but the ignorance that has covered Its nature for a time is to be removed. Therefore the whole scope of all systems of Yoga (and each religion represents one) is to clear up this ignorance and allow the Atman to restore its own nature.<sup>6</sup>

It is important to note that Vivekananda sees each one of these methods as directly and independently capable of leading to knowledge and freedom. One very frequently encounters statements of the following kind:

Each one of our Yogas is fitted to make man perfect even without the help of the others, because they have all the same goal in view. The Yogas of work, of wisdom, and of devotion are all capable of serving as direct and independent means for the attainment of Moksha.<sup>7</sup>

He does not see the different methods as being in conflict or in contradiction with each other. His rationale for a plurality of means is derived from the variety of human personalities. Each one is adapted to a different nature and temperament. *Karmayoga* is meant for the active, energetic temperament, the



worker. *Bhaktiyoga* satisfies the emotional individual, while *jñānayoga* is intended for the philosophical and rational mind.<sup>8</sup>

There is no single discussion in the lectures and writings of Vivekananda where one can turn to find a clear and comprehensive statement of his understanding of *karmayoga*. What exactly constitutes *karmayoga* is not therefore, obvious and apparent. Vivekananda defines *karma* very broadly to refer to any kind of action, physical and mental. He describes various personal motives from which individuals act. Among these are the desires for wealth, fame, power and heaven. He suggests that higher than all of these is work for work's sake, which he explains to mean working just for the good which comes out of it. Good, in this case, appears to indicate results which are beneficial to others. In searching for his central definition of *karmayoga*, the concept which emerges most often therefore, is the idea of unselfish action.<sup>9</sup> Although Vivekananda often speaks of *karmayoga* as an attitude of indifference to the results of action, one has to suppose that the unconcern is with personal selfish results only. A total unconcern with results will make even action for the sake of others impossible, for it is difficult to see how any action could be initiated without some end in view.

In addition to implying actions centred on the welfare and service of others, Vivekananda also presents *karmayoga* as comprising a number of distinctive attitudes. Two of these find frequent mention in his writings and lectures. The first is the recognition of work as a privilege of worshipping God by serving Him in all men. The *karmayogī* does not serve others because he views his help as being indispensable, but because the occasions of service are opportunities for ridding himself of selfishness and advancing towards *moksha*. The act of service is ultimately beneficial to the *karmayogī*.<sup>10</sup> This attitude of work as worship, the giving up of all fruits of action to God, is one way, according to Vivekananda, by which the *karmayogī* achieves detachment from the results of action. One suspects, however, that in order to emphasize the distinction between *karmayoga* and *bhaktiyoga*, Vivekananda insists that detachment is also possible even for one who does accept a personal God (*īśvara*). In this case, he insists that detachment has to be accomplished by the force of will. He justifies this by a recourse to the system of *Sāṃkhya*, where *īśvara* is not presupposed, and suggests that detachment is also possible by adopting an attitude of the world as a temporary place of abode, meant only for the education of the soul. Instead of identifying with nature, the latter should be viewed as a book to be read and then disposed of. Whether through the acceptance of *īśvara* or not, the *karmayogī*'s attitude is characterized by a detachment from concern with the personal rewards of action.



The Karma-Yogi works because it is his nature, because he *feels* that it is good for him to do so, and he has no object beyond that. His position in this world is that of a giver, and he never cares to receive anything. He knows that he is giving, and does not ask for anything in return and, therefore, he eludes the grasp of misery. The grasp of pain, whenever it comes, is the result of the reaction of 'attachment'.<sup>11</sup>

The view that *karmayoga* does not necessitate a belief in *īśvara* highlights an important difference between Shankara and Vivekananda. With Shankara, there hardly seems to be any distinction between *karmayoga* and *bhaktiyoga*. The form of detached activity conceived by Shankara is that which is possible by the dedication of all actions to *īśvara*, and the calm acceptance of results as coming from Him. *Karmayoga* therefore, is not possible without an appreciation of *īśvara*, and of Him as the dispenser of the fruits of action.<sup>12</sup>

The *karmayogī's* attitude to work is also characterized by an absence of fanaticism. He is non-fanatical because of his recognition of the limitations of all that he does. He knows that in spite of all his efforts the world will never be made perfect. Vivekananda often describes the world as a dog's curly tail, which will always bend regardless of the efforts made to straighten it. The *karmayogī* also frees himself from fanaticism and self-importance by the awareness of his own dispensability.

In Vivekananda, as contrasted with Shankara, one notices the attempt to enlarge the concept of *karmayoga*. In most cases, however, his rationale for the inclusion of a particular concept within the framework of *karmayoga* is not sufficiently clear or justified. The result is that the *karmayoga* concept becomes unwieldy and almost all-inclusive, blurring Vivekananda's aim of identifying it as a distinctive path to *moksha*. Without any development of argument, he claims, for example, that *karmayoga* has specially to do with the understanding of the three *guṇas* (qualities) and their employment for success in activity. He also identifies *karmayoga* with the variation in morality and duty according to life circumstances.<sup>13</sup> In the course of the same discussion, he contends that the central idea of *karmayoga* is non-resistance.<sup>14</sup> Within the concept of *karmayoga*, Vivekananda also sees a natural place for the study and practice of rituals and 'symbology', as well as for an understanding of the nature and force of words and other sound symbols and their use.<sup>15</sup>

We have already drawn attention to Vivekananda's attempt to underline the distinction between *karmayoga* and *bhaktiyoga* by arguing that the former does not necessarily depend on the acceptance of *īśvara*. In order to further strengthen his claims for *karmayoga* as a direct and independent path to *moksha*, Vivekananda tries to distinguish it, one supposes from *jñānayoga*, by



describing it as being free from all doctrines and dogma. This is a conclusion about *karmayoga* which he reiterates throughout his treatment of this path.

The Karma-Yogi need not believe in any doctrine whatever. He may not believe even in God, may not ask what his soul is, nor think of any metaphysical speculation. He has got his own special aim of realising selflessness; and he has to work it out himself. Every moment of his life must be realisation, because he has to solve more by mere work, without the help of doctrine or theory, the very problem to which the Jnani applies his reason and inspiration and the Bhakta his love.<sup>16</sup>

This is a most puzzling conclusion which critical examination of his statements on *karmayoga* finds very difficult to sustain. His views are clearly loaded with explicit and implicit doctrinal assumptions. These are clearly evident when his discussions presuppose *īśvara*, for there are definite concepts of the nature of God involved, but they are no less so when this standpoint is not presumed. The obvious fact is that one embarks on this path of detached activity only after conclusions about the nature of existence and the ultimacy of *moksha* as the goal of life. The lack of concern with the personal rewards of action is not absolute, for *karmayoga* is presented as a method adopted with a definite aim in mind. Through unselfish detached action, the *karmayogī* hopes to be free. In spite of what Vivekananda says therefore, the action of the *karmayogī* is not, and cannot be an end in itself.

We should at this point make the observation that Vivekananda nowhere distinguishes between *karmayoga* as means and as end. One gets the impression that the possibility of selflessness is assumed from the beginning, without considering the very personal aim of the *karmayogī*. The distinction between *karmayoga* as means and end is more clearly preserved in Shankara, who appears to see the possibility of unselfish action only after the *karmayogī* has attained the fullness of Self which the knowledge of *brahman* (*brahmajñāna*) confers. From the logic of Vivekananda's presentation of the problem of *avidyā*, it would appear that he also must accept that complete unselfishness is not possible without Self-knowledge. The unresolved paradox is that in his presentation of *karmayoga*, he assumes that one cannot attain to Self-knowledge unless one is perfectly selfless. In fact, in spite of his non-acknowledgement of it, and his claim that *karmayoga* as a path involves no doctrines or dogma, the *karmayoga* Vivekananda presents is intelligible only in the doctrinal context of *Advaita*. Its rationale is to be found there only. This is unconcealed in the following kind of discussion, quite common in his *karmayoga* presentation and suffused with *Advaita* postulates and premises.

Therefore Karma-Yoga tells us to enjoy the beauty of all the pictures in the world, but not to identify ourselves with any of them. Never say 'mine' . . . If



you do, then will come the misery. Do not say 'my house', do not say 'my body'. The whole difficulty is there. The body is neither yours, nor mine, nor anybody's. These bodies are coming and going by the laws of nature but we are free, standing as witness. The body is no more free than a picture or a wall. Why should we be attached so much to a body?<sup>17</sup>

In these kinds of passages, *karmayoga* appears to be more the result of Self-knowledge, to be possible only through Self-knowledge, rather than as a means to it. If *karmayoga* is to be distinguished from *jñānayoga* by the absence of any doctrinal postulates, then Vivekananda has not at all proved this. The knowledge which is the declared aim of this method to discover is already presupposed at the inception. Vivekananda's claim therefore, that the *karmayogī* is or can be indifferent to doctrine is unsustainable. As an independent path, it does not exist in a doctrinal vacuum and cannot be said to be unique on this basis. Vivekananda has nowhere defined what exactly he means by doctrine or dogma, but one wonders if his view is not somehow made explicable by proposing that the *Advaita* contentions have such an axiomatic character for him, that they easily slip into his discussion as unquestionable propositions.

The most problematical aspect of Vivekananda's discussion on this matter is the connection he aims to establish between *karmayoga* and *moksha*. It is here also that other important contrasts with Shankara are evident. In evaluating this connection, it is very important to bear in mind Vivekananda's consensus with Shankara on the apparent nature of bondage through *avidyā*, and the simple necessity of knowledge for its removal. Each different path, he claims, is an independent and direct means to this knowledge. It is clear therefore, that he presents these *yogas* as having the same function which the *Vedas*, as a source of valid knowledge in the form of words (*śabda-pramāṇa*), has for Shankara. They are supposed, in their distinct ways, to give rise directly to *brahmajñāna* and remove the notional limitations of the Self.

For Shankara, the function of *karmayoga*, as of all other methods, techniques and disciplines, is the development of the requisite qualities of intellect and emotion prior to inquiry into the last sections of the *Vedas* (the *Upanishads* or *jñānakāṇḍa*). The latter alone constitute the valid source of the knowledge of *brahman*. The disciplines themselves never assume the functions of sources of knowledge (*pramāṇas*). These disciplines, however, can assist in bringing about mental purity (*citta-śuddhi*) and this quality is necessary for proper inquiry into the sentences of the *Vedas* revealing the nature of *brahman* and for the assimilation of this knowledge. Vivekananda also accepts that mental purification is the most important aim of *karmayoga*, but because of his view of *karmayoga* as a path of detached selfless activity, mental purity is conceived as the attainment of unselfishness and indifference



to personal rewards.<sup>18</sup> Vivekananda's radical departure from Shankara is his contention that this unselfishness and detachment directly bring about Self-knowledge. Unlike Shankara, he does not mention the intervening need for inquiry into the *Vedas* as a source of valid knowledge. The following is most typical of the kinds of statements one encounters in trying to understand how *karmayoga* leads directly to *moksha*.

We must do the work and find out the motive power that prompts us; and, almost without exception, in the first years we shall find that our motives are always selfish; but gradually this selfishness will melt away by persistence, till at last will come the time when we shall be able to do really unselfish work. We may all hope that some day or other, as we struggle through the paths of life, there will come a time when we shall become perfectly unselfish; and the moment we attain to that, all our powers will be concentrated and the knowledge which is ours will be manifest.<sup>19</sup>

Ignorance is presented as somehow falling away with the cultivation of selflessness and detachment. We have already commented on the fallacy of Vivekananda's assertion that *karmayoga* is free from and does not necessitate any concern with doctrine or dogma. We have shown the presupposition and inextricable involvement of *Advaita* postulates in his discussion. Even if one were to grant that the selflessness and detachment of which Vivekananda speaks are possible without *Advaita* presumptions, it is still difficult to grasp how this accomplishment leads to *moksha* in the *Advaita* sense. Within the context of *Advaita*, attachment and selfishness are the symptoms of *avidyā* and not the cause of it. Their overcoming would still appear to leave the fundamental problem of *avidyā* and bondage unresolved.

The very few areas of discussion where one encounters attempts to develop in more detail the relationship between *karmayoga* and *moksha* are still not satisfactory. One always has to accept the supposition that *avidyā*, by some means or other, spontaneously falls away. Very often, in making the connection between *karmayoga* and *moksha*, Vivekananda's language becomes hazy and imprecise, and there is a tendency to reformulate the nature of the problem and the goal to be attained. Selfishness, for example, rather than *avidyā*, is described as the root of bondage.<sup>20</sup> The goal is presented as that of self-abnegation, and *karmayoga*, by its emphasis on the service of others, leads to this by encouraging self-forgetfulness and humility. This is identified by Vivekananda with renunciation (*nivṛtti*).

We become forgetful of the ego when we think of the body as dedicated to the service of others—the body with which most complacently we identify the ego. And in the long run comes the consciousness of disembodiedness. The more intently you think of the well-being of others, the more oblivious of self you become. In this way, as gradually your heart gets purified by work, you will



come to feel the truth that your own Self is pervading all beings and all things. Thus it is that doing good to others constitutes a way, a means of revealing one's own Self or Atman.<sup>21</sup>

Again, however, one cannot but add that from the *Advaita* viewpoint, *avidyā* is not simply a problem of exalting or humbling oneself. It is the erroneous apprehension of the *ātman*. Humility, as a virtue which may be concomitant with the service of others, might be more conducive to the attainment of *brahmajñāna* than the arrogant exaltation of oneself above all others, but it is difficult to see how it can destroy *avidyā* and lead to the kind of Self-understanding which *brahmajñāna* implies. Without any doctrinal presuppositions, the supposedly natural progression which Vivekananda postulates in the above passage from the service of others to a knowledge of the distinction of Self and body, its non-dual and all-pervasive nature, is difficult to understand. It is not at all clear how such far reaching conclusions can be made or how they are self-evident. A 'feeling' of affinity with others through service is not the same as a knowledge of the non-duality of the *ātman*.

On another occasion, *moksha* is identified as 'infinite expansion', claimed by Vivekananda to be the goal of all religious, moral and philosophical doctrines. He identifies this 'infinite expansion' with 'absolute unselfishness' and claims that *karmayoga* leads to the former by bringing about the latter.<sup>22</sup> Again, it is not at all clear whether 'infinite expansion' is the same as *brahmajñāna* with its implications about the non-dual nature of the *ātman*, and the latter's transcendence of spatial and temporal limitations. In *Advaita*, of course, one can only speak figuratively about the 'infinite expansion' of the Self. Being, by definition, limitless, such an 'expansion' can only be in terms of gaining knowledge of its infinity. The consistency of this argument and the preciseness of definition and language are not always preserved by Vivekananda in his *karmayoga* discussion.

The picture of the relationship between *karmayoga* and *moksha*, in Vivekananda, appears to become even more complicated when one encounters various statements which seem to deny and contradict the position that selfless activity leads directly to *brahmajñāna*. All work is presented by him as presupposing ignorance, and one must infer therefore, that work is incapable of leading directly to freedom.

The active workers, however good, have still a little remnant of ignorance left in them. When our nature has yet some impurities left in it, then alone can we work. It is in the nature of work to be impelled ordinarily by motive and attachment... The highest men cannot work, for in them there is no attachment.<sup>23</sup>



There are passages in which knowledge is affirmed over and above work as the only means to *moksha*.

Salvation means knowing the truth. We do not become anything; we are what we are. Salvation (comes) by faith and not by work. It is a question of knowledge! you must *know* what you are and it is done.<sup>24</sup>

On occasions the connection between work and freedom is presented only as an indirect one, a position seemingly identical with that of Shankara.

*Question:* Can *Jiva-seva* (service to beings) alone give *Mukti*?

*Answer:* *Jiva-seva* can give *Mukti* not directly but indirectly, through purification of the mind. But if you wish to do a thing properly, you must, for the time being, think that it is all-sufficient.<sup>25</sup>

Are these two sets of statements, arguing respectively for a direct and indirect connection between *karmayoga* and *moksha*, entirely opposed? Is Vivekananda adopting here a position identical with Shankara and implying a need for enquiry into the *Vedas* as the valid source of knowledge about *brahman*? To suggest this would be to go against the main lines of all his arguments about the limitations of knowledge derived from the *Vedas*, and the relationship between *karmayoga* and *moksha*. Besides, even in these statements where he speaks of work as an indirect aid to *jñāna*, there is definitely no mention of any necessity for inquiry into the *Vedas* as a source of valid knowledge (*śabda-pramāṇa*) about *brahman*. What, then, do we make of the suggestions in these passages? There is one significant occasion on which Vivekananda gives us a clue to his meaning in statements such as these.<sup>26</sup> All work, Vivekananda says here, is only useful for removing the 'veils' that obscure the 'manifestation' of the *ātman*. After the 'veils' have been removed, 'the Atman manifests by Its own effulgence'. In this sense, according to Vivekananda, work cannot be said to lead to *ātmajñāna*. Vivekananda cites Shankara for support of this view, but Shankara's position is an entirely different one. For Shankara, there is no concept or question of the *ātman* manifesting in this manner, for It is never, at any time, unmanifest.<sup>27</sup> As Awareness (*cit* or *caitanya*), It is always self-revealing, and 'manifesting' and 'unmanifesting' would be misleading terms.

The problem, as far as Shankara is concerned, is an incorrect knowledge of an ever-revealing *ātman*. The *ātman* is not an unknown entity, but one that is incorrectly known. The *Vedas*, as the authoritative source of *brahmajñāna*, are not necessary for making the existence of the *ātman* known, but for correcting false notions about It. For Shankara, the self-revelatory nature of the *ātman* does not imply or is equivalent to a knowledge of Its true nature, and he does not suggest that *brahmajñāna* is somehow spontaneously



manifest without proper inquiry into its authoritative source, the *Vedas*. In the discussion cited above, Vivekananda does not distinguish between the so-called 'manifestation' of the *ātman* and the knowledge of Its nature. Again, there is a problem of terminological and conceptual clarity and consistency. For if 'manifestation' is identical with self-revelatory character, and this again is equal to a knowledge of *ātman*'s nature, there will never be a problem of *avidyā* for anyone at any time. There is also the problem of the 'manifestation' of knowledge by a Self which is defined, in *Advaita*, to be free from and beyond all activity.

Although this particular passage helps, to some extent, to clarify some of Vivekananda's apparently contradictory statements about the indirect nature of work, it does not, however, reconcile all such passages. Perhaps in trying to explain the difficulties which arise in Vivekananda's treatment of *karmayoga* as a direct and independent path to *moksha*, one must also take into consideration what appears to be a tendency in Vivekananda to idealize and extol each method as he describes it, without attempting to reconcile the contradictions arising from this approach. In his discussion there is no attempt to relate the particularity and possibilities of *karmayoga* to the implications of *avidyā* as the fundamental human problem and to some of the basic presuppositions of *Advaita*. The result is an obscurity of terminology and concept. We should also add here that many of the same problems are evident in his treatment of *bhaktiyoga* and *jñānayoga*. Ultimately we remain unconvinced about the connection between *karmayoga* as a path of detached selfless activity, and *moksha* as involving a knowledge of the non-duality of *ātman*, Its nature as ultimate reality, and Its transcendence of spatial and temporal limitations.

Vivekananda lived at a time of tumult and trauma in the history of Hinduism resulting from the impact of the West. In his interpretation of the Hindu tradition, he responded to and incorporated many of the diverse influences which were exerting themselves at the time. In a very short career, he injected a spirit of confidence into Hinduism, and his many positive achievements must be acknowledged. One of his most positive concerns was to elicit from *Advaita* the justification for a life of commitment to the service of society. He also sought to challenge the widespread indifference of Hindu society to poverty and suffering. It is understandable, but unfortunate, that his presentation of *Advaita* was not more critically appraised during his lifetime so that he could have responded to many of its problems and contradictions. In view of his wide and continuing influence, a more critical assessment of the nature and meaning of his reinterpretations is necessary today.



## NOTES

- 1 *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (hereafter abbreviated CW), 8 vols., Mayavati Memorial Edition, Calcutta, Advaita Ashrama, 1964–71. See CW1, p. 53; CW2, pp. 83–84; CW3, p. 128.
- 2 See CW1, p. 238; CW2, pp. 257–58.
- 3 See *The Brahma-sūtra Bhāṣya of Śaṅkarācārya* (hereafter abbreviated B.S.B.), trans. Swāmī Gambhīrānanda, 3rd ed., Calcutta, Advaita Ashrama, 1977. See B.S.B. 1.3.19.
- 4 See CW2, p. 439; CW4, p. 227.
- 5 See CW2, p. 350; CW3, p. 239.
- 6 CW8, p. 152. Vivekananda claims the support of the *Upanishads* for the view that the attainment of knowledge is possible in a variety of ways. He does not, however, cite any specific texts.
- 7 CW1, p. 93. Also p. 55.
- 8 For various elaborations of this argument see CW2, pp. 385–88; CW6, pp. 16–17, 137–38.
- 9 See CW1, pp. 31–32, 42–43, 62.
- 10 See CW5, p. 246; Also CW1, p. 84.
- 11 CW2, p. 392.
- 12 See *The Bhagavad Gita: with the Commentary of Sri Sankaracharya*, trans. A. Mahadeva Sastry, Madras, Samata Books, 1977. See 3:19.
- 13 See CW1, pp. 36–39.
- 14 Vivekananda supports this view by a very unusual interpretation of Arjuna's predicament in the *Bhagavadgītā* and Krishna's subsequent instruction to him. His argument is that Arjuna was terrified of the opposing army and masked his cowardly feelings by arguments about love. Krishna's goal was to lead him to the ideal of non-resistance, but this could not be accomplished without initiation into resistance to purge him of cowardice.
- 15 See CW1, pp. 72–75. Along with his attempt to enlarge the concept of *karmayoga*, one also finds in Vivekananda the search for new ways of justifying this means. The primary new rationale centres around the idea of *karmayoga* as the secret of successful work. This is emphasized in a manner which appears to take *karmayoga* out of the context of being a way to *moksha* and converts it into a pragmatic method of maintaining the success of any activity. The main argument in this context is that failure in accomplishing the end of activity is often due to an obsession with these ends and insufficient attention to the means. *Karmayoga* remedies this by diverting attention from the result and stressing the perfection of the means. See CW2, pp. 1–9.
- 16 CW1, p. 111. Also p. 93. Among other reasons, Buddha is described as an ideal *karmayogī* because of what Vivekananda considers to be his doctrinal indifference.
- 17 *Ibid.*, pp. 100–101. Also p. 116.
- 18 See *ibid.*, p. 84. Also CW7, p. 179.
- 19 CW1, pp. 34–35. Also p. 59, 93, 107, 110; CW3, p. 142; CW4, p. 436; CW7, p. 63, 69, 75, 110.
- 20 See CW8, p. 153.
- 21 CW7, pp. 111–112.
- 22 See CW1, p. 109.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 106.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 512. Also p. 498.



- 25 CW5, p. 325. See also pp. 240–41; CW1, p. 517; CW7, p. 54, 159–60, 221–22.  
 26 CW7, 178–79.  
 27 See B.S.B. 1.1.1–2. Shankara's argument that the *ātman* is only incorrectly known is one of the key arguments used by him to demonstrate why knowledge derived from the words of the *Vedas* can be an adequate solution to the problem of *avidyā*. The task of the *Vedas*, in his view, is not the revelation or production of an unknown entity, but simply the correction of false notions about the *ātman*. In other words, knowledge derived from a valid source is a sufficient solution where the problem involved is one of ignorance.

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# THE NĀNAKSAR MOVEMENT

Eleanor Nesbitt

The aim of this paper<sup>1</sup> is to present the development of one particular movement within the Sikh Panth.<sup>2</sup> Because of the spiritual significance of the place and name 'Nānaksar' for devotees I am calling them the Nānaksar Movement. I intend to indicate distinctive characteristics of this Sikh group. In noting origins and tendencies one is compelled to consider the nature of *sants*<sup>3</sup> and indeed *bhakti*<sup>4</sup> in North India, but such a study is beyond the scope of this outline. I hope that my observations of the Nānaksar Movement elicit comment from historical, economic, sociological, political and psychological perspectives. Any theological statements of Sikh faith must also be made and assessed in the light of the spiritual emphases of such vigorous Sikh minorities. Although this paper concentrates upon a phenomenon unnaturally isolated for the purposes of discussion my intention is not to present it as a breakaway group, but as evidence of the powerful dynamics in contemporary Sikhism worldwide. In literature there has been a tendency to present it as a relatively static, monolithic entity. What in fact is Sikh religion?

On page 692, Bhāi Kāhan Singh's *Mahān Kos*<sup>5</sup> lists seven sacred places called Nānaksar or 'Nānak pool', but I am dealing with a movement based upon an eighth Nānaksar near Jagrāon. This name does not mean that Gurū Nānak visited the spot, but it bears a spiritual significance unobtainable in English translation. The *sar* or *sarovar* is the pilgrim's bathing place, a holy 'tank' and also that inner water in which the Gurū's disciple is refreshed by *nām simaran* or meditation upon the divine reality with which Gurū Nānak is one. The name Nānaksar received official sanction when, subsequently, the local railway station was called Nānaksar.

Nānaksar lies near Kalerān village, some five kilometres from Jagrāon and forty-five kilometres west of Ludhiānā, in the western edge of Ludhiānā District, Pañjāb. Nearby is Sherpur, an outlying village of Tehsil<sup>6</sup> Jagrāon, where on the *ṭurnimāsī* or full-moon of the month of Kattak (October-November) 1869 or 1872<sup>7</sup> Nand Singh was born into the Sūhī *got* (clan) of a Rāmgarhiā family.<sup>8</sup> His parents were Jai Singh and Sadā Kaur, and his brothers were Bhagat Singh and Santā Singh. Stories of his life can be read in English in Doabia 1981<sup>9</sup> and in Pañjābī in Gurmukh Singh (n.d.)<sup>10</sup> and in Balbīr Singh 1978.<sup>11</sup> It is not always easy to fit episodes from these and oral



sources into a clear chronological sequence. In any case a certain element of mystery enhances the mystique surrounding the *sant*.

Without recounting the many journeys and miracles of Nand Singh's life the salient facts appear to be as follows: His mother died a few weeks after his birth. As a child he heard the stories of Sūraj Parkās janamsākhīs,<sup>12</sup> etc., from his elder brother, Bhagat, and displayed exceptional religious devotion. At fourteen he went to work for his eldest brother, Santā, toiling with outstanding diligence at the construction tasks appropriate to a Rāmgarhiā family. At night he would do penance in the fields. When the family decided he should marry the widow of his now deceased brother, Bhagat, he left home to perform *sevā* (religious service) at the Sikh shrine, Hazūr Sāhib.<sup>13</sup> In particular he would each night bring two brass pots of Godāvārī river water at 12.15 a.m. to cleanse the gurdwārā. At Hazūr Sāhib he had visions of Gurūs Nānak, Har Krishan and Gobind Singh. On divine instruction he studied the meaning of the Gurū Granth Sāhib (Sikh scriptures).<sup>14</sup> In 1904 he left Hazūr Sāhib and travelled in present-day Pakistan, practising such austerities as worshipping on one leg. He became a disciple of Sant Wadhawā Singh of village Lehrā Gagā and, on his recommendation, of Harnām Singh of Bhucho. In each place that he visited he 'would sit in meditation in a temporary hut-like structure built with unbaked bricks under the round with a thatched roof.' On leaving he always insisted that this was burnt down so that no *derā* (religious centre) could be established there by devotees who sought him out in ever increasing numbers.

In 1912 he came to Kalerān, where an epidemic ended when he performed *akhand pāth* (uninterrupted forty-eight hour reading of the entire Gurū Granth Sāhib). In Ferozepore Sant Jawand Singh said it would be better to die than to receive no darshan (manifestation) of Gurū Nānak.<sup>15</sup> Nand Singh vowed not to eat the prashad, or holy food, which he prepared daily until Gurū Nānak appeared. After some days<sup>16</sup> Gurū Nānak appeared out of the Gurū Granth Sāhib and asked what the two sants desired. Nand Singh said 'Je miharbān hoe tām āpnā banā lavo' i.e., 'If you are gracious to me make me your own.' Gurū Nānak was happy and replied, 'Recite and cause others to recite.'

After another period in west Pañjāb Nand Singh returned to Kalerān in 1918 and chose to stay where Nānaksar now stands. It was then overgrown, dangerous and reputedly haunted by ghosts. Earlier Gurū Hargobind had hunted there. The previously brackish water became sweet when drawn by Nand Singh. A small room of mud brick was constructed for the Gurū Granth Sāhib. He lived henceforth a life of austerity, eating food from his hand without utensils, meditating in underground holes (*bhore*) and allowing no building to be erected during his lifetime, although he prophesied that a fine gurdwārā would be built. In 1943 he died.



In 1927 Nand Singh had come across the young boy, Indar Singh, protecting his father's water-melon plants. Indar Singh heard a voice and came to serve Nand Singh and his sangat (religious entourage). He was renamed Īshar Singh, and in the winter of 1933/1934 he became Nand Singh's chief attendant. He never again returned to his family, not did he marry.

By birth Īshar Singh was a Jat<sup>18</sup> of one of the Gill got. He was born in 1916 to Baggā Singh and Pratāp Kaur in Jhoṛārān in Tehsil Jagrāon. He demonstrated his tireless, unquestioning devotion to Nand Singh in ways clearly reminiscent of Aṅgad's uncomplaining service to Gurū Nānak, Amar Dās' to Gurū Aṅgad and Rām Dās' to Gurū Amar Dās. His bare feet were cracked with chilblains and his fingernails worn away. When asked to make tea at night in pouring rain he had to burn his turban<sup>19</sup> to boil the tea. Again he had to prepare prashād in a lonely place. He resorted to using his turban as a well-rope to draw water using a musician's tablā (drum) for making the dough and a passer's hoe as a *tāvā* (gridiron).

As a sant Īshar Singh's style was more imposing than his predecessor's. Many of the conventions now observed by devotees were enunciated by him in keeping with Nand Singh's teaching. People of all castes flocked to him, including influential politicians. He nominated no successor. In 1950 began the construction of the present gurdwārā, a magnificent edifice, described in the Punjab District Gazetteers, Ludhiana. The large pool was completed in just twenty-eight days. There are a number of buildings, of which the main shrine faces the lake. It is white marble, with a golden dome. Below it is the cellar marking the *bhorā* or pit where Nand Singh meditated. It is now an incense-perfumed, marble room containing a lifesize portrait of Nand Singh. To gain access to this basement the visitor, of whatever religion, must perform, or undertake to perform, a certain number of prayers from his/her tradition. Above ground is a special room where Nand Singh's winter and summer clothes are preserved in a glass wardrobe. On the opposite side of the *sarovar* or pool to the main shrine is the building where *Sukhmaṇī pāṭh* is constantly performed. This non-stop reading of Sukhmaṇī Sāhib, Gurū Arjan Dev's great hymn, was the wish of Nand Singh (Doabia p. 26). This building marks another spot where Nand Singh meditated. There are also quarters for *sevādārs* (temple attendants) and visitors, the house of the chief *rāgī* (musician), Kehar Singh, and the building where amrit, the sweetened water for Sikh initiation, is prepared each *purnimāsī*.

Nānaksar shares its distinctive characteristics with a growing number of gurdwārās erected by rival aspirants to Nand Singh's succession. Had Īshar Singh clearly appointed a successor the movement might have escaped future fission. But other Sikh sants have similarly omitted to name successors e.g. Pūran Singh of the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha, Birmingham. In the



covert struggle to succeed the construction of splendid gurdwārās plays its part. Of Īshar Singh's four principal votaries Nārāyaṇ Singh has established no gurdwārā. Nor has the revered senior rāgī Kehar Singh. Sādhū Singh established the relatively small Nānaksar gurdwārā in Sector 28, Chaṇḍīgarh. Kundan Singh's followers are erecting a large gurdwārā on the outskirts of Ludhiāṇā city. In Shankar Road, Delhi a very impressive gurdwārā is being constructed by Gurdev Singh. His devotees have also built one at 255 St. David Road, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada and they have converted a Methodist church building in Waterloo Road, Smethwick. His followers are responsible for a temple in Dehrā Dūn, another in Kurukshetra, two in Gurdāspur District and three in Farīdkot District—all in North India. Coventry's Nānaksar Gur Sikh Temple, where I first scented the Nānaksar trail, is the creation of Sikhs venerating Mīhān Singh. His sangats are constructing a gurdwārā in Vancouver, Canada. As well as gurdwārās in Pañjāb e.g. his home village, Siahāṛ, he has an āshram on the alluvial sand perilously near the Jamunā River near Majnū Tilā, across the Wazīrbād Bridge on the northernmost edge of Delhi.

I shall now list characteristic features of Nānaksar gurdwārās which distinguish them from other Sikh temples. No Nīśān Sāhib (pennant bearing the Khālāsā emblem<sup>20</sup>) flies at Nānaksar gurdwārās. This apparently indicates dissociation from the Shiromaṇī Gurdwārā Parbandhak Committee and from Akālī politics.<sup>21</sup> When questioned devotees often seemed unclear about the significance of the Nīśān Sāhib or its absence. The reiterated insistence that there were no political interests shows the presuppositions of Sikhs both in Nānaksar and other gurdwārās. The reality is more complex (see below). Comparison with the spiritual centres of other sants, Sikh and Hindu, would be relevant. Neither Nand Singh nor Īshar Singh married. Only celibate attendants are allowed to serve in Nānaksar gurdwārās. These attendants are referred to as *bahīngams*, from the Sanskrit for 'bird' as they must be unattached to any worldly abode or earthly considerations. This is apparently a clear continuity with the Nirmalā<sup>22</sup> tradition of asceticism favoured by Nand Singh. The mainstream injunction to lead a householder's life (*grihasth*) is not challenged, but the fact that Mīhān Singh is a married man is sometimes levelled against him by followers of Gurdev Singh and the other aspiring leaders. It clearly disqualifies him in their eyes from ever being regarded as a true sant.

The *bahīngams*, of whom there are up to two hundred in larger Nānaksar gurdwārās when their leader is in residence, wear a uniform. The white turban drawn straight across the forehead is reminiscent of Nāmdhārī<sup>23</sup> attire. Comparison of the Nānaksar Movement with the Nāmdhārīs throws up many points of interest to the student of sects in the North Indian context. Unlike Nāmdhārīs the Nānaksar *bahīngams* must leave their legs



uncovered by *pajāmā* or trousers below the *kachh* (Sikh underwear), although legwarmers appear to be acceptable. A long white *cholā* or shirt is worn, as in pictures of Nand Singh. For special religious occasions women favour white.

Central to Nānaksar belief and practice is devotion to the Gurū Granth Sāhib. This is manifested on a prodigious physical scale. Features observable in Nānaksar gurdwārās are enjoined and justified by Īshar Singh's teaching (see Balbīr Singh *op. cit.*). For example, no small stand for the scriptures should suffice as in 'ām gurdwāre' (ordinary gurdwārās), but a full-scale bed with bedcover-sized *rumālās*<sup>24</sup>—not the usual square metre or so of cloth—and a *chaurī* (ritual fan) longer than the customary yak-tail flywhisk. Those I have seen are made of something resembling and sounding like raffia strands.

Toilet items, such as a toothbrush, required by the Gurū Granth Sāhib are mentioned mockingly by Sikh critics. But this painstakingly thorough Nānaksar attention to the Gurū's physical needs is consistent with much more widespread practices as covering the scriptures with more coverings in the colder months.<sup>25</sup> Readers must bath before publicly reading the Gurū Granth Sāhib. During the *pāṭh* (reading) they may not use their normal bedding, and must sit on the ground, not on a cot. While reading their faces must be partially covered, rather like a surgeon's, to prevent saliva dishonouring the Guru. All food must first be offered to the Gurū Granth Sāhib. The basis for this is the firm conviction that the Gurū (Nānak) will manifest himself from the Gurū Granth Sāhib, as witnessed by Nand Singh. 'Sri Guru Granth Sahib shall have to be worshipped as living. Sat Guru Nanak Dev Ji' (Doabia p. 29). Doabia mentions how originally Nand Singh did not draw a curtain in front of the Gurū Granth Sāhib, but later did so to spare the Gurū the indignity of countless stares as the food was consumed. One recalls the parallel practice in Hindu temples when food is served to the images of the deities. We are given evidence that the Gurū does indeed consume, 'prashād' (Doabia p. 43–45). Īshar Singh assured his followers that these practices were not idolatrous unless the worshipper believed that the scriptures were simply paper and ink. He adduced instances from the lives of the bhagats (pre-Nānak saints represented in the Sikh scriptures). Through the bhagat's faith the Lord appeared in physical form from the images worshipped respectively by Dhannā and Nāmdev with true devotion.

Ghī lamps and incense are to be used. This is arguably contrary to the spirit of the Sikh code of practice, the *Rahit Maryādā*, *A guide to the Sikh way of life*, according to which 'Rituals derived from the other religions, such as the ceremonial lighting of candles, burning of joss sticks, idol worship and the ceremonial ringing of bells are completely forbidden. Candles may, however, be used purely for lighting and use of joss sticks, flowers, etc., is allowed for deodorising or purifying the atmosphere'.

The Gurū should have a room where quiet prayer is possible for pure



devotees. From my limited observation this is an underground chamber, an immediate reminder of the *bhorā* at Nānaksar itself. However *bahingams* at Shankar Road, Delhi, emphatically denied this connection. In Delhi, it was insisted, rate-payment was the reason for going underground. In Chandigarh I was merely told that Nanaksar temples shared certain common characteristics 'like' (and I quote) 'a chain of Kentucky chicken shops'. In the Smethwick gurdwārā Gajjan Singh explained how at Nānaksar the Gurū Granth Sāhib would be taken to a cool underground chamber during the hot weather, but that this was unnecessary in Britain. Neither the Coventry nor the Smethwick temple has a subterranean Gurū's room. I have recorded the various answers given by Nanaksar *bahingams* to a single enquiry to illustrate the complexity of investigating groups such as this.

The iconography of Nānaksar gurdwārās is distinctive. Although Gurū Gobind Singh is portrayed it is Gurū Nānak's picture which predominates in size and frequency. According to the tradition, through Nand Singh's prayer, Gurū Nānak materialised from the Gurū Granth Sāhib for the artist, Bhagat Singh to paint. This original portrait, installed at Nānaksar, is copied in all the Nānaksar gurdwārās. He is always depicted seated cross-legged, clad in white and holding a rosary. (Nand Singh emphasised the importance of using a rosary, e.g. Doabia p. 37). From Nānak's face emanate rays of light. On the sole of his upturned right foot is a sign, known as *padam* which indicates his spiritual rank. He is equal to an avtār (incarnation) of Lord Krishna. 'One should fix his mind on the lotus of feet (*sic*) of the Guru, particularly on the Padam (Divine Star)<sup>26</sup> present on the the sole of Guru Nānak.' (Doabia p. 37). Also much in evidence is the portrait of Nand Singh. As in the Coventry temple he may be shown standing, holding a staff in his right hand, a rosary in his left. He is clad in a white *cholā* and white scarf, hanging down on each side like a Christian priest's stole. His turban is white. Behind him is a background of imagined foliage, a waterfall and mountain peaks—a visual reference to Gobind Singh's meditation at Hemkunt, as recounted in Bachitar Nāṭak,<sup>27</sup> and to the gods and yogīs of the Himālaya. A popular picture also depicts Nand Singh in exactly the same posture as Nānak, but seated on a tiger skin. Īshar Singh, also against imagined peaks, is similarly seated with upturned right foot on a leopard skin. (Once again Hindu ascetics are represented in yogic meditation on a tiger skin and Durga rides a tiger, embodying Shakti or divine power). In the Shankar Road gurdwārā is the skin of a Kenyan lion in the Guru's room.

On the style of kīrtan (congregational hymn-singing to instrumental accompaniment) I am not qualified to comment. To an untutored ear the sharp, ecstatic sound resembles the sound of Nāmdhārī worship. A melody composed by Nand Singh introduces congregational worship.

In conversation with followers of Nand Singh certain Pañjābī words recur.



Is this an incipient Nānaksar terminology? The sant's discourses are '*bachan*' rather than '*kathā*', the term *bahingam* for the celibate temple attendants is not in general use among other Sikhs. Chapātīs or *roṭī* are known as '*prasāda*', a form of '*prashād*' indicating food offered to and blessed by the Gurū. For the gurdwārā devotees use the word *ṭhāṭh*, and explain this in various ways. Rather than Doabia's definition (*op. cit.*, p. 17) it means 'pomp, splendour' as in Singh Brothers, *Panjabi – English Dictionary*, Amritsar 1954.

Nānaksar devotees are expected to be totally vegetarian, abstaining from eggs and fish as well as all types of meat. One sees clear parallels with Hindu asceticism and Brahmanical practice. But the question of meat eating is a vexed one for Sikhs, especially for amritdhārīs (baptised Sikhs), many of whom abstain after taking amrit. The scriptures are ambiguous. Gurūs Hargobind and Gobind Singh were hunters according to mainstream tradition, although Nānaksar Sikhs ingeniously deny that the Gurū could have taken animal life. For example on Baisākhī day 1699 Gurū Gobind Singh did not, as most Sikhs claim, shed the blood of a goat, but actually severed the heads of the *pañj pyāre* (five beloved ones), restoring each head to a different pair of shoulders. Nāmdhārī teaching requires a strictly vegetarian diet to the extent of avoiding tap water since it has passed leather filters or washers. Īshar Singh's arguments against eating meat are set out in Balbir Singh Pt. II, pp 126–143. *Jhalkā* killing is more violent than the *halāl*, i.e. ritually pure Muslim method, and the Rahitnāmās (Sikh codes of discipline believed to represent Gurū Gobind Singh's injunctions) prohibit the consumption of *halāl* meat. Therefore, he argues, *jhalkā* meat must also be regarded as taboo. That meat is essential for strength, or that Muslim supremacy over Hindus could be traced to dietary factors is untrue. For, Īshar Singh continues, Sikhs eating grains defeated goat-eating Muslims. That other subject of perennial dispute, alcohol, is also prohibited. (Doabia p. 33). This corresponds with the teaching of other sants e.g. Pūran Singh, whose impact affected the lifestyle of many UK Sikhs.

Contrary to general Sikh practice of cooking and serving langar (corporate meal on the gurdwārā premises) in Indian Nānaksar temples only food prepared outside may be brought in for those who come. However in Coventry food is prepared in the gurdwārā kitchen. The reason given is that circumstances in Britain are different. Food cannot be brought in from surrounding villages as in India. However I am unconvinced since overseas gurdwārās, no less than Indian ones, could be reserved solely for prayerful activity, and the langar served in Smethwick's Nānaksar gurdwārā is brought in from outside.

So, too, where contributions to the gurdwārā are concerned. At Nānaksar itself visitors purchase sweets at a stall on the access road. Only these may be offered as one pays obeisance to the Gurū Granth Sāhib. Some are poured



into a large container, most are returned as prashad to the devotee. No money is received. Instead donations are made in kind, e.g. marble for construction. 'Those, who have got notes and coins in abundance, offer only one piece before the Guru. Is the Guru a beggar?' (Doabia 23-24). As I was informed by Bhajan Singh, *bahingam* at Shankar Road, Delhi, money given at the time of *mathā tekṇā* (obeisance) is only a bribe as everyone comes to the gurdwārā with some selfish purpose. Again, contrary to Nānaksar practice elsewhere, Mīhān Singh's congregation in Coventry give money. The reason given for this departure from Nānaksar rules is that you cannot pay gas bills etc. in kind. But there is no receptacle for money in evidence in the Smethwick temple although bills have to be paid. According to Amarjit Singh, now of Coventry but previously from a village near Nānaksar, no-one pays the Nānaksar gurdwārā electricity bill, yet even when there are power cuts all around the gurdwārā is never affected—an apparent equation of spiritual and electrical power.

In Nānaksar gurdwārās the full moon, *purnimāsī*, is celebrated with a special *kīrtan*, often attended by thousands of devotees. According to Nand Singh staying awake throughout this particular night confers more benefits than staying awake through out all the other nights of the month, and staying awake throughout the night of the *purnimāsī* of Kattak i.e. Gurū Nānak's birthday, is more beneficial than staying awake every other night of the entire year. (Doabia p. 40). Nānaksar devotees explain that they thus celebrate Gurū Nānak's birthday monthly rather than yearly. As one votary said, since all Gurūs are one in spirit the celebration of Nānak's birth subsumes all the others. The way in which Nand Singh celebrated *purnimāsī* is detailed by Doabia (p. 41-42), including the Ārati with sprinkling of scent and scattering of flowers<sup>29</sup> and the Ardās.<sup>30</sup> This prayer was prefaced by prayers that Gurū Nānak might appear and followed by prayers that the Gurū partake of the holy food. This is still the practice in Nānaksar gurdwārās. The anniversary of Nand Singh's death is the major annual event in Nānaksar. This falls in approximately the third week of August, the 11th to 13th Bhādrā. Thousands flock to Nānaksar.

For followers of Mīhān Singh Gurū Gobind Singh's birthday, falling in January or December, or, as in 1984, in both months, is an occasion for supreme festivity if Mīhān Singh is present. So 10 January 1984 saw thousands processing through his native village, Siahār,<sup>31</sup> halfway between Ludhiāṇā and Malarkotlā. A plane showered coloured paper on the crowds below, thronging alongside the Mercedes, covered with artificial flowers, carrying Gurū Gobind Singh's framed portrait in the seat beside the driver. This car followed a decorated float bearing the Gurū Granth Sāhib, Mīhān Singh and close followers. In Coventry, 2 years previously, followers processed along the Foleshill Road. From this general description certain



similarities and dissimilarities of emphasis as compared with the other strands of Sikh tradition should be apparent. One also perceives divergences within the Nānaksar Movement and the potential for further separation between rival groups, especially as the movement grows overseas. Comments made by devotees in one sangat about those in another are often revealing in their studied understatement.

I have suggested the need for a historical perspective encompassing the pre-Nānak bhagats such as Kabīr, the succession of Sikh Gurūs amid a series of secessions and rival claims to Gurūship. Also extremely relevant is the Nirmalā insistence on asceticism, comparable to the Udāsī<sup>32</sup> ideal. Nand Singh's early guide, Harnām Singh of Bhucho, was a Nirmalā (Doabia p.11-17). The movement's affinities with the Nāmdhārīs must be examined. Mīhān Singh's grandson, Tarlochan Singh, recalled the influence of the Nāmdhārīs on Mīhān Singh whose village, Siahār, lies in a strongly Nāmdhārī area close to the Nāmdhārīs historic headquarters, Srī Bhainī Sāhib. In the contemporary situation, where Akālī Dal supporters have condemned the Nirānkārīs,<sup>33</sup> there is fear, voiced by Professor Attar Singh of Chandigarh that Sikh sects become anti-Sikh. Whereas Nirānkārīs and Nāmdhārīs speak unequivocally of the need for and existence of living, human Gurūs, turning to the Ādi Granth for justification, Nand Singh's followers stress the primacy of the Gurū Granth Sāhib, citing instances which demonstrate this conviction in the lives of Nand Singh and his successors. When questioned, devotees emphasise that Nand Singh (or whoever) never claims Gurūship, although this disclaimer is in itself typical of a true Gurū. Followers may well privately believe that their living leader is an embodiment of the Gurū. Rigorous analysis of the language of 'sant', 'avtar' and 'Gurū' could be misleading, for there is a certain looseness and interchangeability in mainstream Sikhism and in Indian thought generally. For example, in an essay Gurbachan Singh Tālib wrote, 'The Gurū is . . . not an 'avatar' or incarnation of 'vishnu' or any other god.' But, in another essay in the same collection<sup>34</sup> J. S. Grewāl wrote that 'divine' sanction behind his [the Gurū's] mission is indicated [in the scriptures] by referring to him as the 'avtar' and the prophet' Tālib spells out the orthodox view, 'while pious men as saints and devotees are venerated, anyone styling himself as Gurū is repudiated.' Will the Nānaksar Movement ever take this step to heresy?

It is salutary to recollect that in the absence of an institutionalised priesthood, and in a predominantly oral tradition, Sikh identity and revivalism has always depended upon often itinerant sants like Nand Singh. Only because of Nand Singh and other sants did thousands of Pañjābī villagers receive amrit and become aware of a distinct Sikh heritage.

To understand the present vigour of the Nānaksar Movement it is helpful



to examine other contemporary religious activity among Indian communities profoundly influenced by migration. Here Pocock provides a useful parallel, the Swāmī Nārāyan sect in London.<sup>35</sup> A personality cult among displaced immigrants necessitates a jet-set spiritual leadership. Gargi perceives the psychological need. 'Abroad both Sindhis and Punjabis have felt lost, uprooted and it has come naturally to them to flock to Baba Gurbachan Singh as a focal point for continuing their traditions and cultic cohesiveness, besides spiritual renewal.' One notes the sense of security and enhanced status experienced by members of hard-pressed, encapsulated minority communities when a sant visits them, looks with favour upon them or stays in their home.

The location of Nānaksar in an area of Pañjāb whence thousands have migrated to Britain and America is significant. Wealth earned overseas is expended not only on tractors and cars but also on lavish temples and on *akhaṇḍ pāṭh* as those living in alien societies resort to traditional means of winning God's favour. This can also be witnessed in the wealth of Attar Singh's gurdwārā at Rārā Sāhib. Migrants may need to feel dedication to God and to holy men, but desire and create something splendid in twentieth century terms—marble edifices and the latest technology. Devotees deny political involvement. Nevertheless Balbir Singh proudly lists VIPs who have paid respects to Īshar Singh. The names include Master Tārā Singh, Sant Fateh Singh, President Rājendrā Prasād, Mahārājā Yādavinderā Singh. Followers of Mīhān Singh are pleased that Mrs Indirā Gāndhī and President Zail Singh visited him at his Delhi āshram, and that Minister Butā Singh participated in the Gurū Gobind Singh birthday celebrations at Siahār this January. But even if sants and their followers genuinely forswear politics the politicians may have fewer scruples. Partāp Singh Kairon, onetime Chief Minister of Pañjāb, approached Īshar Singh whose followers consequently supported the Pañjābī Sūbā Movement. At the least, non-alignment with a particular party is a political stance. Holy men are not always above political ambition, at least in the interplay of factions. In Britain political candidates have asked to speak publicly in Nānaksar gurdwārās. According to my information such overtures have been refused, but the fact that sants could influence the vote of thousands has far-reaching implications. In Pañjāb sants have long been power brokers, particularly since the institutionalising of elections 1937. Even communist candidates have had to woo the sants.

It will be interesting to note the caste composition of this and other sant traditions. In Britain some gurdwārās are predominantly Jaṭ, Rāmgarhiā, or Bhāṭrā, not to mention the lower caste Ravidāsī and Bālmiki temples. The bhakti tradition has cut across caste, or rather, in practice, appealed to low caste groups whose status could be enhanced. The fact that Nand Singh and Īshar Singh were respectively Rāmgarhiā and Jaṭ presumably attracts



members of these two groups. The fact that Minister Butā Singh is a *chamār* (of leather-worker caste) or that Muslim musicians sang their praises on 10 January in Siahār may or may not indicate a disregard for caste characteristic of several Indian 'export' cults. Since Gurdev Singh visited East Africa where the majority of Sikhs have been Rāmgarhiā this factor plays a part in drawing devotees in Smethwick.

The unquestioning enthusiasm of some young Pañjābīs brought up in Britain suggests that the 'personality cult' is a compelling means of relating to their religious heritage. Knowledge of their scriptures and history may well be via the sant around whom a warmer, more immediate mythology grows. Ethics are dictated by 'Bābāji'. (Literally 'grandfather' this term combines affection with respect, and is used for addressing and referring to the beloved leader.) The sant's teaching springs from the Gurū Granth Sāhib, whose language remains mysterious to most British-born Sikhs. The sant's exposition carries an infallible authority. How will this affect the character of second and third-generation diaspora Sikhism? Should not the host society's educationists and students of religion be as aware of the dynamics of sant groups as they are of the five K's and ten Gurūs of the textbooks.<sup>37</sup> This becomes a practical no less than an academic concern if dialogue and understanding between Sikhs and others is to proceed intelligently.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 This is a slightly modified and amplified version of a paper read 14/5/1984 to a day consultation on Sikhism held under the auspices of The British Association for the History of Religions. I am grateful to The British Academy and The Spalding Trusts for financing a research visit to Panjab. Many individuals both in India and in Britain have helped in this enquiry, notably Mohan Singh and Harjinder Kaur.
- 2 The panth refers to Sikh 'way', and also to the total Sikh community.
- 3 Sant or saint has a wide range of connotations, including both the mystic teachers of mediaeval North Indian religious tradition and popular contemporary Sikh and Hindu 'holy men'.
- 4 Bhakti means loving devotion to a personal God, especially Krishna. This was the theme and inspiration of such North Indian mystics as Mirā Bai, Kabir and Ravi Dās.
- 5 Mahān Koś, lit. 'great dictionary', to date the most comprehensive reference work on the Sikh's literary heritage. Kāhan Singh Nābhā, *Mahan Kosh*, 3rd ed. 1974 Language Dept., Patiala, Panjab.
- 6 Tehsil, the administrative subdivision of a district. The location is given in *Punjab District Gazetteers: Ludhiana*. Chandigarh 1970, pp. 660-661.
- 7 There is a discrepancy between Doabia, H. S., *Life Story of Baba Nand Singh Ji of Kaleran (Nanaksar)*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar 1981, which gives 1872, and



- Singh, Balbir, *Pragat Guran ki Deh* Part I. Jagraon 1978, which gives 1869. The full moon of Bikrami month Kattak is popularly regarded as Gurū Nānak's birthday.
- 8 *Got* (Hindi *gotra*) is an exogamous kin group within a *zat*. (Hindi *jati*) or sub-caste. Rāmgarhīā is the preferred title of members of the Sikh carpenter, blacksmith and mason communities, whose 18th c. military commander, Jassā Singh, assumed the title from a fort near Amritsar.
  - 9 *Op. cit.*
  - 10 Singh, Gurmukh, *Anand Chamatkar*, Part I, Nanaksar.
  - 11 *Op. cit.*
  - 12 Suraj Prakāsh, the popular title for Bhai Santokh Singh's lives of the Gurus, otherwise known as Gur Partāp Sūraj. Janamsākhiś, lit. 'birth evidences', are popular accounts of the life of Gurū Nānak.
  - 13 Hazūr Sāhib, an important Sikh shrine at Nander, 20 km. N.W. of Hyderabad. Here Gurū Gobind Singh died after being stabbed.
  - 14 Gurū Granth Sāhib i.e. Adi Granth. I use the former term since the Guruship of the scriptures is essential to Sikh belief, and emphasised especially in the Nānaksar tradition of devotional practice, as outlined later in this paper.
  - 15 Doabia *op. cit.*, p. 11-12.
  - 16 The number of days differs in Balbir Singh *op. cit.* and Gurmukh Singh *op. cit.* Doabia omits this incident.
  - 17 'Recite' ('japo') Reciting, and so remembering, God's name is central to Sikh piety.
  - 18 'Jat', the rural landowning, peasant farmer community to which more Sikhs belong than to any other.
  - 19 The turban is of great symbolic religious significance to Sikhs and must not be dishonoured. Such episodes emphasise total dedication to a godlike master.
  - 20 The Khālsā emblem consists of two swords (*kirpān*) cupping a circle (*chakar*) bisected by a double-edged sword (*khaṇḍā*).
  - 21 The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (S.G.P.C.) established 1920 is the Sikhs' most authoritative elected body. It is dominated by the Akālī political party, which, although divided, campaigns for greater Sikh autonomy.
  - 22 'Nirmalā', lit. 'pure', a learned, celibate Sikh group, originating in the time Gurū Gobind Singh, who sent the five first Nirmalas to Banaras to study Hindu theology.
  - 23 Nāmdhārīs (Kūkās), a Sikh revivalist and nationalist movement. It arose in the 19th century in response to Rām Singh whom Nāmdhārīs regard as one in a continuing line of human Gurūs.
  - 24 *Rumālā*, a usually brightly coloured cloth which covers the open Gurū Granth Sāhib when this is not being read. Sikhs offer *rumālās* on special occasions.
  - 25 For similar treatment of the Gurū Granth Sāhib in Sikh villages see I. P. Singh in *Aspects of Religion in Indian Society*, ed. L. P. Vidyarthi, Meerut 1961.
  - 26 'Padam', see e.g. Walker, Benjamin, *Hindu World: an Encyclopaedic Survey of Hinduism* Vol. II Allen and Unwin 1984, p. 430 which lists many other physical signs of exceptionally great people.
  - 27 Bachitar Nātak, lit. 'wonderful drama'. This forms part of Dasam Granth a compilation of works attributed to Guru Gobind Singh. Bachitar Nātak is an autobiographical account including his previous incarnation as an ascetic in the Himalayas.
  - 28 Ārati is a typically Hindu act of worship.



- 29 Ardās lit. 'petition' is the Sikh prayer marking the conclusion of congregational worship.
- 30 Punjab Govt., *Punjab District Gazetteers, Vol XV A. Ludhiana District*, w. maps 1904 Lahore, Civil and Military Press 1907. Map (end page).
- 31 Udāsī refers to the followers of Gurū Nānak's ascetic son, Srī Chand.
- 32 This is specifically the Sant Nirankārīs whose leader Gurū Gurbachan was killed in 1980. Professor Attar Singh holds the Bābā Farid Chair at Punjab University, Chandīgarh.
- 33 McMullen, C. O. ed., *The Concept of Gurū in Indian Religions* ISPCK Delhi, 1982.
- 34 Pocock, David. 'Preservation of the Religious Life: Hindu Immigrants in England' in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, (N.S.) X 2, July-Dec. 1976, p. 341-365.
- 35 Gargi, Balwant, *Nirankari Baba*, Thompson Press, Delhi 1973.
- 36 This article was prepared before the events leading up to and following the army's entry of the Golden Temple 6/6/84. The repercussions in Pañjāb and among Britain's Sikhs bring an intensified sense of identity. The sant's role must now be analysed against this background.

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*Religion* (1985) 15, 81-97

## REVIEW ARTICLE

**NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN PERSPECTIVE****Paul Heelas**

Roy Wallis. *The Elementary Forms of the New Religious Life*.  
 London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984, pp. 156. £12.50.

Roy Wallis presents 'a framework for conceptualising the new religious movements' (p. 1). His subject matter is the range of movements which have appeared in the 1960s and 1970s in the West. The 'conceptualisation' of the movements, he goes on to say, 'elaborates a logical trichotomy into three analytical types'—to wit, world-rejecting, world-affirming and world-accommodating in form. Since it is maintained that 'all the empirical cases lie somewhere within the conceptual space bounded by the characteristics of each type' (p. 73), it appears that Wallis has provided the useful service of presenting a comprehensive framework to advance characterization, comparison, analysis and explanation. The typology is supposedly exhaustive and it is held that this framework or way of looking at new religions provides a basis for developing 'a theory of the origins, recruitment bases, characteristics, and developmental patterns which they [the analytical types] display' (p. 1).

The typology is thus held to be theoretically significant. It can be used to 'identify [ ] the significant characteristics of the phenomena in terms of a theory which turns out to be able to bear the heat of critical appraisal' (p. 4). By concentrating on the ways in which new religious movements orient themselves to the world (including society), Wallis believes that 'an excellent predictor of a wide range of further attributes' is provided (p. 5). Thus it is held that world-rejecting and world-affirming orientations 'seem to create imperatives of, and constraints upon organization, belief and behaviour over a very wide range' (*ibid*). In particular it is held that these two orientations are likely to attract distinctive clienteles, and that 'theoretically predictable properties result [ ] from conflicting orientations' (p. 39).

Wallis is working with the hunch that a typology based on orientational criteria is theoretically significant in that differences in orientation to society



or the world are likely to result in predictable consequences. In terms of practical research one can cluster empirical cases into different types and then test whether or not predicted consequences do indeed correlate with what is hypothesized of the types.

*The Elementary Forms of the New Religious Life*, it can be seen, promises a great deal. To the best of my knowledge it is the first sustained attempt to develop an integrated typology-cum-theory in a field of inquiry where not as much progress has been made in discerning significant patterns, regularities and processes as might have been expected. Indeed, it is this reviewer's opinion that *The Elementary Forms* is a strong candidate for the award of 'first useful textbook' on the new religions. For at first sight it appears to offer all that is required for, say, university teaching: a firmly based and comparative perspective, a way of finding both order and theoretical clarity in a field where there is so much empirical and theoretical diversity. But on second sight a number of worries come to mind, worries which prompt the conclusion that we still await a sound introduction to the 'elementary forms' of the new religions. Almost all these worries derive from the nature of Wallis' typology, discussion of which takes up the bulk of this paper.

As 'ideal types' (p. 5) new religious movements are distinguished as follows:

A new movement may embrace that [social] world, *affirming* its normatively approved goals and values; it may *reject* that world, denigrating those things held dear within it; or it may remain as far as possible indifferent to the world in terms of its religious practice, *accommodating* to it otherwise, and exhibiting only mild acquiescence to, or disapprobation, of, the ways of the world (p. 4, my emphases).

Although Wallis is happy to accept that a particular new religion may show features of more than one type, it comes as something of a surprise to find that the Japanese-originated Soka Gakkai movement is introduced in connection with the world-accommodating type (p. 5), is later introduced to illustrate the world-affirming variety (pp. 23, 24, 27, 51), and is also described as 'an apparently stable combination of world-accommodating and world-affirming types' (p. 38).<sup>1</sup>

Surprises such as this made me wonder whether there could be something amiss with Wallis' typology. Why does Wallis appear to be unable to decide how to characterise the Soka Gakkai movement as it appears in the West? Could it perhaps be the case that his types are not analytically distinct, or that they are not clearly enough formulated to be applied accurately?

As already indicated, Wallis presents his 'logical trichotomy' and associated 'analytical types' as 'ideal types'. However, there is no explicitly



formal or conceptual investigation of the differences between the three orientations to the world. Whilst not denying that logical, ideal-type analysis is entirely absent from the book under review, the fact remains that the meaning of these differences is conveyed by reference to *empirical cases*. Thus at the beginning of the second chapter, to do with three types of movement, Wallis writes, 'I propose to provide a characterization of the three types of new religion, illustrating the characteristics of each type from actual movements which appear to approximate them particularly closely, or to embody features of the type in sharply visible form' (p. 9).

Bryan Wilson writes that, 'The point of type construction is to delineate a probable and *expectable* constellation of related features and *logical relationships and sequences*, and, by *comparing the type with actual phenomena*, to become aware of the issues that stand in need of explanation (1982 p. 104, my emphases). Since Wallis' types are illustrated by empirical cases to the extent that they are more like 'generalizations' than ideal types (see Leach, 1961), I feel justified in drawing upon such cases in order to criticise the trichotomy. I do not hesitate to use this data to argue that the 'ideal types' are not well formulated and do not function well; that what begins as a supposedly 'logical trichotomy' ends up being 'illustrated' or portrayed by empirical detail so as to become rather chaotic and confusing. In other words, granted that the 'ideal types' are illustrated by or are filled out with empirical data, the complexity of these data and the fact that their selection is not regulated by detailed prior formal-cum-conceptual analysis of the trichotomy, results in the supposedly analytical distinctions becoming increasingly lost in the contingencies of the illustrative material.

With this in mind I now ask:

- (1) Is each ideal type formulated or illustrated in an analytically coherent fashion? Are the three types analytically distinct, clearly distinguishable at the 'logical' (p. 4) level?
- (2) Are the ideal types formulated in such a way that they can be applied, individually or in combination, to characterize successfully new religious movements? Can they be clearly distinguished at the empirical level? Do they accurately capture all possible orientations to the world or do they sometimes override other orientations—and so result in distortion?

The first set of questions, it will be noted, involve exploring the role played by Wallis' empirical data in illustrating the trichotomy; the second set involve exploring what happens when the trichotomy is applied 'back' to empirical cases.

(1) *Coherence and distinctiveness*

Krishna Consciousness, Children of God, the People's Temple and the Manson Family are presented as exemplars of movements which 'reject that [social] world, denigrating those things held dear within it'. 'The world-rejecting movement', we are told,



views the prevailing social order as having departed substantially from God's prescriptions and plan. Mankind has lost touch with God and spiritual things, and, in the pursuit of purely material interests, has succeeded in creating a polluted environment; a vice-ridden society in which individuals treat each other purely as means rather than as ends; a world filled with conflict, greed, insecurity and despair. The world-rejecting movement condemns urban industrial society and its values, particularly that of individual success as measured by wealth or consumption patterns. It rejects the materialism of the advanced industrial world, calling for a return to a more rural way of life, and a reorientation of secular life to God (p. 10).

The emphasis here is on what Wallis later calls their 'sharp break with the world around them . . .' (p. 107). However, Wallis also gives examples to 'illustrate the close link between religious and political aspirations among world-rejecting sects' (p. 12). The difference between these two orientations is seen in the fact that on the one hand world-rejecting movements are referred to as 'anticipating the millennial transformation in its *own* community of the saved' (p. 122, my emphasis), whereas on the other hand Wallis refers to 'a number of such movements [which] have cultivated the company of the powerful' in order to 'recover the *world* for God' (p. 12, my emphasis).

Bearing in mind the point that the *meaning* of Wallis' ideal types has to be sought in his illustrative material, it is difficult to see how these two orientations can be combined in one coherent analytical category. What 'world-rejection' means cannot be the same when applied to characterise the Krishna devotee who wants politicians to 'take advice from Krishna Consciousness. . .' (as quoted, p. 12) as when applied to movements which reject the world to the extent that salvation and change can only be sought within the movements themselves. In fact I for one am no longer clear as to what exactly counts as world-rejection.

That we are not dealing with a clear logical trichotomy is also indicated by the consideration that Wallis' illustrations of world-affirming and world-accommodating religions show that these two types *also* involve world-rejection.

Movements of a world-affirming variety, it will be recalled, 'embrace that [social] world, affirming its normatively approved goals and values'. Much of what Wallis *himself* has to say about this variety of movement does indeed illustrate affirmation, providing him with a relatively clear contrast with the world-rejection type. Thus we are told, 'World-affirming movements commit themselves strongly to the modern world and its forms, of which bureaucracy is one of particular prominence' (p. 118), and it is maintained that those who join do so 'not to escape or withdraw from the world and its values, but to acquire the means to achieve them more easily and to experience the world's benefits more fully' (p. 23).

However, Wallis also indicates that the world-affirming type is far from



devoid of the theme of rejection. A major characteristic of the world-affirming type is that what we can call the 'socialized self' must be rejected, in the sense of people gaining liberation from it, if they are to achieve their full potential:

A . . . theme, clearly closely related to the desire to achieve one's full potential, is that of coping with our sense of constraint, of facilitating the desire for liberation from social inhibitions, of breaking free from the bonds of social roles to reach the 'real' person beneath. The individual will be released from conventional ritual; from habitual modes of speech or interaction; from inhibitions acquired in childhood; from repressions of instinctual life; or from a learned reserve. He will thereby be enabled to 'get in touch with' his feelings, his emotions; and encouraged to express the 'authentic' self beneath the social facade; to celebrate spontaneity, sensual pleasure and the indulgence of natural impulse (p. 30).

Rejection of society in the guise of the socialized self is necessary if the 'authentic' self is to be realised—a self-knowledge which then encourages criticism of those aspects of society which do not accord with how the 'real' person should live. Given the powers of the 'real' self, the goal is to use these powers to 'transform' that which is seen to be objectionable about society and, more generally, what it is to live in the world.

Rejection is implied when Wallis uses the term 'transformation' in connection with the world-affirming type. It is difficult to envisage what transformation is about unless it involves the rejection, or less strongly the leaving behind, of previously existing states of affairs. Wallis cites Forem's study of Transcendental Meditation to characterize this feature of world-affirming movements. The extract clearly indicates the extent to which this movement is dissatisfied with, rejects and aims to transform the everyday world:

When individuals within a society are tense, strained and dissatisfied with life, the foundation is laid for conflict in its various forms: riots, demonstrations, strikes, individual and collective crimes, wars. But a society composed of happy, creative individuals could not give rise to such outbreaks of discord (as quoted, p. 24).

Wallis continues,

Hence, it follows that producing social change is dependent upon producing individual change. The individual must 'take responsibility' for the circumstances around him and for *transforming* them (p. 24, my emphasis).

Wallis does not appreciate the extent to which what he calls world-affirming movements are actually engaged in the business of self and then world transformation. Since I am currently using his own illustrative material to



criticise the analytical types, this is not the place to introduce additional ethnographic material to substantiate the point. It is discussed further in the next section. But I can point to a number of passages which I think contradict, or otherwise do not suit, the theme of affirming normatively approved goals and values:

they [the world-affirming movements] pursue *transcendental* goals by largely *metaphysical* means . . . (p. 35, my emphases).

. . . the social order is not viewed as *entirely* and *irredeemably* unjust . . . (p. 24, my emphases).

. . . a world-transforming mission . . . (p. 101, cf. p. 123).

Spiritually was thus for many a recourse in the face of the undermining of the conception of the Growth Movement as a way of life by the individualism and incipient instrumentalism that early became widely prominent (p. 101).

By not distinguishing between world-affirmation and world-transformation, by including the latter orientation within the former, the notion 'world-affirming' loses its analytical cohesiveness and clarity. The notion becomes incoherent: if the purpose of a movement is to transform what it is to live in the world, how can it be classified as one which simply affirms normatively approved goals and values? Furthermore, the amount of rejection found in supposedly world-affirming movements does not merely contradict the ideal type. It also helps take away the analytical distinctiveness of the world-rejection—world-affirmation contrast. In other words, the extent to which the world-affirming religions he cites actually reject mainstream states of affairs makes it difficult to see how they can be distinguished—in terms of this single orientational criterion—from world-rejecting movements.

Examples can be found in both camps of movements which reject the ego or self as programmed by society (see p. 19 on the Manson Family, p. 30 on the world-affirming movements). Both camps reject much of the purely secular world. (It is true that some of the world-affirming movements, Silva Mind Control for example, seem to work at the level of 'normatively approved goals and values'. But it is possible to argue that even movements of this variety are not devoid of what Wallis calls 'the transcendentalising of one's product' (p. 101)). Both camps aim for or expect transformation. Both camps reject much of traditional Western religious life.

Indeed, in at least two regards supposedly world-affirming movements take rejection to a greater extreme than those cited as world-rejecting in character. Far from affirming Christianity to the extent shown by the Children of God, for example, such movements are largely anti-theistic and lack 'most of the features traditionally associated with religion' (p. 20).<sup>2</sup> And it is probably true to say that rejection of the ego or socialized self is also more



radical. The Manson Family might have aimed to 'discard ... all the materialistic middle-class programming and the ego that it had built' (as quoted, p. 19), but I would venture to say attempted to do this in less organized and (apparently) powerful fashion than one finds, for instance, in an est seminar.

To summarize the argument thus far, I have tried to point out that Wallis includes world-affirming or utilizing characteristics in the world-rejecting type (e.g. affirmation of some aspects of Christianity, attempted utilization of politicians)<sup>3</sup> and that he includes world-rejecting or transforming characteristics in the world-affirming camp. It follows that both types are internally inconsistent, and they lack analytical distinctiveness.<sup>4</sup>

It remains to pass a few observations on his world-accommodating type. The key definition, it will be recalled, is that a movement of this variety remains 'as far as possible indifferent to the world in terms of its religious practice, accommodating to it otherwise, and exhibiting only mild acquiescence to, or disapprobation of, the ways of the world'. An immediate difficulty is that the definition is not clear. On one reading 'indifferent to the world in terms of its religious practice' means indifference to the religious practice of the world; on another reading it means that the religious practice of the world-accommodating movement itself is indifferent to the world in general.

In terms of the first reading the difficulty is that it is contradicted by other passages: as when we are told that, 'At a conscious level at least, the innovative religious movement with a world-accommodating orientation will be seen not so much as a protest against the world or society, but as a *protest* against prevailing religious institutions, or their loss of vitality' (p. 36, my emphasis). In terms of the second reading the difficulty is that if the indifference refers to the religious orientation of the movement itself, how can this orientation be characterized as 'accommodation'?

Perhaps this is nitpicking. So let us consider what appears to be the clearest formulation of the world-accommodating religions, that they accommodate/show mild acquiescence or disapprobation to the world or society whilst protesting against prevailing religious institutions. My main worry here is not so much that 'accommodation' does not appear to be a very satisfactory term to characterize movements which are engaged in religious protest against mainstream religious institutions. Rather it has to do with what is taken to count as accommodation.

Since I am supposing that the expression 'indifferent to the world' must refer to the non-religious world (for world-accommodating religions are not indifferent with regard to mainstream religions), are we to conclude that accommodation involves indifference? Or are we to rely on dictionary definitions, which involve the idea that accommodation occurs when an



individual(s) feel the need, whether for negative or positive reasons, to adjust, adapt, conform to some state of affairs?

I must say that I am confused. The Catholic Pentecostal movement is introduced to illustrate the type. 'The movement's basic conviction is that a better society can emerge only when people have become better . . .' (as quoted, p. 36). Is this in fact an attitude of indifference or accommodation? 'World-accommodating new religions find their support among those who are securely attached to the prevailing social order, although unhappy with the level of impersonality and instrumentalism which pervades it, even within the religious institutions to which they often retain a firm attachment' (p. 122). Does this unhappiness amount to indifference or accommodation? Can this 'firm attachment' be better characterized in terms of 'protest' or even rejection.

And then there is the fact that it is by no means easy to see how a clear (analytical) distinction can be drawn between world-accommodating and world-affirming movements. We read, for example, that:

Many young people, faced by their inability to change the world, decided to accommodate to it to a greater or lesser extent. For some, the world-affirming movements were to provide the recipe or the anodyne for this accommodation (p. 51).

If indeed the orientation of at least some world-affirming movements can be described in terms of accommodation, one wonders what Wallis has in mind when he contrasts the two kinds of movement. Especially as he can say, of the Aetherius Society (discussed under the world-accommodating title), 'Their response to the world is one of accommodation, while they pursue their mission of striving to save it from its self-inflicted fate' (p. 38). For activities of the members, engaging in rituals to transmit energies for the good of mankind whilst in the main living conventional lives as housewives, accountants, shopkeepers and the like, are curiously alike those who practise Transcendental Meditation, classified as a world-affirming movement.

To emphasize this last point, the blurring of the two types is clearly seen in the fact that both are seen as accommodating to the world in order to be effective: by every possible means, it [Soka Gakkai in its accommodatory mode] seeks to foster "the impression that its values, aims, and conduct are in conformity with, or at least not incongruent with certain values, traditions, and normative standards within its community or society of operation" (p. 39); 'it [the world-affirming movement] will quite happily model itself upon those aspects of the world which are useful to the movement's purpose' (p. 33).<sup>5</sup> And, as should be apparent, blurring also occurs when Wallis accepts that movements of either 'kind' at least sometimes go beyond simply accepting the world as it is.



(2) *Application*

Since Wallis claims that 'some actual cases approximate extremely closely to these [ideal] constructs and will be drawn upon frequently as sources of appropriate illustrative material' (p. 5) perhaps the worst indictment of his typology would be to demonstrate that *these* actual cases do not in fact approximate as he would like us to believe, and that as a result they are misrepresented by the constructs.<sup>6</sup>

I cannot hope to demonstrate this with regard to all the cases which are adduced, and indeed it is possible that certain movements can be accurately characterized in terms of the typology (in terms of individual types or in terms of types in combination). I shall therefore limit myself to the 'type' with which I have some first hand knowledge, the 'world-affirming' variety. My contention is that the majority, if not all of the world-affirming movements introduced by Wallis aim at so much more than world-affirmation that characterization in terms of this type can at best only convey part of the picture. At worst, if the term is applied monolithically and in the 'approximate extremely closely to' sense, such characterization is fundamentally misleading.

Most obviously, if the (social) world referred to in the definition of world-affirming movements as those which '... embrace that [social] world, affirming its normatively approved goals and values' is taken to include mainstream religion, the reader is likely to come away with an erroneous impression. Supposedly world-affirming religions certainly do not engage in much positive affirmation of Christian values and beliefs which, at least in the States, provide such an important ingredient of their surrounding environment. The extent to which, say, est-like movements actually reject the beliefs and codified moralities of mainstream religions is clearly implied in the following, an extract from Luke Rhinchart's *The Book of est* (1976) and given by a seminar member in response to the seminar leader:

But you're telling me I've got to destroy my belief system and my whole life is based on my intellectual and moral beliefs and on my feeling that I should achieve the most intelligent beliefs. You'll never get me to give them up. If that's what the training is all about, I'll never get it (p. 28).

Rather less obviously, if instead it is held that what is affirmed pertains to the normative as envisaged in secular terms, the case has to be made that supposedly world-affirming movements generally go well beyond whatever 'surface' affirmation of the normative might be in evidence. Objection must be made to Wallis' claim that '... rather than transforming the world or creating an alternative to it, these movements offer recipes, techniques and knowledge to reduce the gap between aspiration and actuality' (p. 51).

I used the expression 'rather less obviously' because at the surface level it



is without question that a number of the movements under consideration present themselves in accord with what they take to be appealing worldly aspirations. This is one way how they attempt to maximize their impact and gain recruits. The Church of Scientology Religious Education College, for example, advertizes 'Self-Betterment Courses' when 'subjects include effective communication, how to study, relate with other people, the mind, work, finance, organization and management'.

It is possibly the case that some of Wallis' world-affirming movements operate entirely at this (accommodatory?!) level. This might be so with regard to the Church of Satan, whose members 'desire successes denied them—money, fame, recognition, power . . .' (Wallis, p. 51). It is also the case that some of those who pass through the more transformative of the 'world-affirming' movements interpret their experiences in non-transformative terms: I know of one firm of accountants in London whose personnel have taken an est-like seminar but who are simply getting on with the job of being successful capitalists. But considerations such as these should not distract from the fact that what the majority of the 'world-affirming' movements are *basically* about has little to do with affirmation of normative goals and values.<sup>8</sup>

To refer to Scientology again, higher levels of initiation into this movement take participation well beyond the world-affirming tone of the kind of advertising already mentioned. Although these higher levels are shrouded in secrecy, some idea of what they are about can be gleaned from Hubbard writing, for example, that,

There is an old mystic idea that there is a chasm or abyss between the existence the world is on now and a higher plateau of existence, and that many people in trying to make it across fell into the abyss. Well, we've built a bridge which is all complete now and it can be walked. It goes from one state of existence to another higher state of existence (*The Auditor* vol. 188).

The aim of Scientology (to 'bring the whole world under the Org board' (as cited by Wallis, p. 65)) should be understood in these world-transforming if not world-transcending terms.<sup>9</sup>

Another illustration of the importance of transformation is seen in the stated purpose of est—'to transform your ability to experience living so that the situations you have been trying to change or have been putting up with, clear up just in the process of life itself' (also cited by Wallis, p. 22). Or think of the slogan 'Exegesis—in the business of transformation' and the fact that a number of organizations are becoming involved in 'the transformation of business.'

Finally, although countless more illustrations could be given, consider the transpersonal psychology movement(s). Participants see themselves as going



beyond humanistic psychology and the human potential movement, their being transformed by contact with the *transpersonal* realm. One leading exponent envisages the differences between these movements as follows:

... the movement of surface structures we call *translation*; the movement of deep structures we call *transformation*. Thus, if we [make changes or] move furniture around on the fourth floor, that is translation; but if we move up to the seventh floor, that is transformation. Many egos try to think about Buddha, which is translation rather than transformation (Grof. 1980, p. 105).

What, then, are the consequences for Wallis' typology? Discussing the typology put forward by Robbins and Anthony, Wallis is apparently in approval of the fact that it 'has achieved a substantial measure of descriptive validity' (p. 4).<sup>10</sup> His faith in descriptive validity is also seen in such claims as, 'I shall advance an alternative typology which seems . . . to provide some *leverage* on the divergent forms of the new religions . . .' (*ibid*, my emphasis). To be useful, it appears, the typology must be able to successfully capture or describe the nature of at least some new religious movements. If those which supposedly 'approximate extremely closely' to the ideal types do not in fact do so, it is difficult not to conclude that the typology is failing in its job of characterizing the movements as belonging to a certain type.<sup>11</sup>

Wallis could of course retort that talk of transformation is somehow peripheral or not 'genuine' (see e.g. his observation on the est-sponsored Hunger Project, p. 25), and therefore need not to be taken into account when it comes to characterization.<sup>12</sup> Well, although it is true that it is not always easy for the outsider to appreciate the difference between world-affirming and world-transforming activities (between successfully being in the everyday world and being in but not of it), participants have to be listened to if the aim is descriptive validity. What they say is a crucial component of the ethnography that is to be characterized.

An immediate conclusion to be drawn is therefore that the typology fails to correctly characterize many of the 'world-affirming' movements, and does so because it does not provide 'an exhaustive set of ways in which a new religious movement may orient itself to the social world into which it emerges' (p. 4). Transformational orientations and goals should not be subsumed under the world-affirming type.

I have been arguing that Wallis' typology suffers from various defects. At the analytical level there are problems to do with coherence and distinctiveness, and the problem that the scheme is not 'exhaustive'. Regarding empirical application, there are therefore problems to do with successful characterization. One consequence of this, now explored in more detail, is that the 'ideal' types do not function well if the aim be one of dividing up the



movements into the various types, or even into categories discerned when types combine.

The reason for this is that virtually *all* new religious movements include orientations to do with world-rejection, world-affirmation, world-accommodation and world-transformation.<sup>13</sup> To maintain that a certain religion is of a certain type is therefore misleading. Wallis, it should be pointed out, accepts that 'all actual new religious movements are likely to combine elements of each type to some extent' (p. 73). What I am suggesting is that this occurs to a greater extent than he supposes, with the consequence that it is *not* 'none the less possible to identify movements that exhibit the characteristics of one more sharply than another' (*ibid*): at least not without misrepresenting them by describing them *as* world-affirming, for example. Such characterization draws attention from the fact that they are *also* world-accommodating, rejecting and transforming.

Try naming a movement which does not reject features of society and the world (whether it be the world taken as real and evil, or as unreal because erroneously understood). Which new religious movement does not attempt to transform or otherwise change the world about it? (As Wilson puts it, 'Every movement seeks to transform the consciousness of converts . . . by persuading them to open themselves to the new experience that it offers' (1976:46); as Wallis says of members of the world-rejecting Children of God movement, they became persuaded 'that only supernatural intervention could transform the world they rejected' (*op. cit.*, p. 106)). Which new movement does not show some accommodation to the world in order to legitimise its activities or in order to to exercise appeal? (According to Robbins and Anthony, 'the youth culture spiritual milieu seems to have shifted in the last decade in the direction of increasing compatibility with and adaptability to dominant institutional and cultural forms' (1978, p. 14); cf. Wallis, 'Accommodation to the surrounding world is the outcome for most new religious movements in the long run if they survive' (*op. cit.*, p. 86)). And which new movement does not affirm something of the world? (In Wilson's summary, 'They promise . . . to increase the happiness and the spiritual power of their devotees *in this world*' (1976, p. 62, my emphasis)).

Combining orientations, the ethnographic complexity of particular movements precludes classification as world-rejecting or whatever. Hare Krishna, supposedly world-rejecting, has been held to socialize adherents into the dominant values of society (see Robbins and Anthony 1978, p. 6). Scientology is treated by Wilson as an illustration of a sect which utilizes 'rational procedures' (world-accommodating?) for 'ultimately religious ends' (world-transforming?) (1976, p. 108). Wilson also points out that 'a sect that teaches separation from the world may none the less inculcate moral precepts and values that facilitate an individual's worldly activities and help him to



success in them' (*ibid.* p. 112). Other illustrations can be taken from earlier in this paper, for example the way in which the Aetherius Society combines world-accommodation and world-change.

Countless other specifications of 'type complexity' could be given. More generally, Wilson points to the fact that as well as promising 'happiness and spiritual power' to their devotees, the new movements 'protect them from the limitations and the baleful influence of everyday life in contemporary society' (*ibid.* p. 62). Also on a more general note, Stone reports that, 'Many of the participants in the groups studied [by the Berkeley New Religious Consciousness Project] were appalled by private greed and bourgeois lifestyle and preferred the stance of being in the world, but not of the world' (1978, p. 133).

Where does this leave the kind of typologizing-cum-theorizing advocated by Wallis? Assuming that this approach is useful, I suspect that improvements could be made by specifying more exactly what counts as each analytical type and by introducing more analytical categories. Additional categories could help prevent internal incoherence. It could also help ensure that movements are more adequately characterized and classified. This in turn could help ensure more fruitful theorizing. For example, if one is working with the hypothesis that 'world-affirming' movements attract a certain variety of people, correlatory study might disconfirm or weaken the hypothesis. But if 'world-affirming' movements were divided into two varieties (world-affirming and world-transcending to better capture their nature), it might be found that the correlation is confirmed in one case but not the other. The correlation is no longer swamped by adventitious data.

But can refinements along these lines help save the approach as a whole? It seems incontestable that, 'If the sociology of religion is to move forward, we must create categories which allow us to study comparatively the social functions and development of religious movements' (Wilson, 1969, p. 361). However, the sheer complexity of the world-orientation of the new religions makes it difficult to see how they can be classified, even in terms of their approximations to ideal types. At least not without creating an extremely complicated system, involving the *many* responses to the world which are possible and not without finding a way of handling mixtures of response found in particular cases.<sup>14</sup>

More positively, although Wallis' typology does not function well when it is used to classify movements as belonging to particular types or even to types in combination, the type-terms are of some descriptive and analytic value. In other words, although it might well be misleading to classify a movement as world-rejecting (on the grounds, for example, that since movements reject the world in various ways and to varying degrees, it is dangerous to use the term to characterize a type), it is useful to characterize



features of the movement as being of this nature. So long, that is, that one then goes on to say something about the particular *kind* of world-rejection which is in evidence.

Also more positively, although I am far from happy with the names given to the types, Wallis has had a measure of success in identifying two empirically significant clusters of movement, those he uses to illustrate the 'world-affirming' and 'world-rejecting' ideal types. Because of this his theorizing is of interest. In other words, because he has had some measure of success in identifying two contrasting empirical clusters, he is able to show that each cluster has tended to attract a distinctive clientele and has had to grapple with distinctive maintenance problems. Explaining such 'correlations' or patterns involves Wallis in some interesting theorizing, including thought-provoking criticism of other theorists.

There is much more to be said of what is a rich, continually stimulating and provocative, work. I close by drawing attention to what is probably his most provocative observation: 'For most, of course, in no matter what form they manifest themselves, the new religions are merely a matter of profound indifference' (p. 72). A strange observation, perhaps reflecting the fact that Wallis is little interested in the subject to which the mass media and the populace at large certainly do not show indifference: the alleged *power* of the new movements to brainwash, bend minds, inculcate fascism, and so on. Certainly academics have no reason to be indifferent to what on any account are interesting 'natural experiments' in socialization. We await *The Elementary Processes of the New Religious Life*.

## NOTES

- 1 Another surprise is to find the Unification Church introduced as world-rejecting (pp. 9, 11), then to read that members 'are particularly prone to articulate a sense of intense moral responsibility, not only for their own sins and behaviour, but that of the whole world' (p. 69). Why should a world-rejecting movement take such responsibility? (C.f., p. 118: the Unification Church is one of those movements that wishes to 'come to terms with the world in which they live').
- 2 It can also be argued that those 'world-rejecting' movements which have a strong eastern input are also more affirmatory of these traditions than the majority of eastern-looking 'world-affirming' movements. ISKON, for example, is seen as legitimat[ing] itself . . . strongly in terms of tradition' (p. 118).
- 3 And the transformative orientation, as when he uses the Children of God to illustrate that world-rejecting movements 'may anticipate an imminent and major transformation of the world' (p. 11).
- 4 Concerning the question of what counts as the world-affirming type, confusion is enhanced when we are told, on the one hand, that 'While the world-rejecting religions offer an alternative to the anonymity, *impersonality*, individualism, and segmentalization of modern life, the world-affirming religions . . . take these



- things *for granted*' (p. 54, my emphases), and on the other that they offer 'means for coping with a *sense of inadequacy*' (*ibid.*, my emphasis) and for improving 'personal relationships' (p. 29, my emphasis; c.f., p. 53 and also the more general point made on p. 72).
- 5 Recall the extent to which world-affirming religions are held to take aspects of modern life 'for granted' (p. 54).
  - 6 Wilson discusses 'an important theoretical question', 'namely, the extent to which an ideal type and given empirical cases may legitimately diverge' (1982, p.104). Accepting his point that ideal types help highlight 'the issues that stand in need of explanation' (divergences), the fact remains that characterization, classification and analysis suffers if the ideal type contradicts what it is applied to. Wilson write of 'reducing the analysis to distortion by application of a grossly inappropriate ideal-type model' (*ibid.* p. 112).
  - 7 Cf. Wilson, 'their basic thrust is against any culture' (1976, p. 67).
  - 8 For additional evidence that 'world-affirming' movements very often cannot be characterized in terms of this type, the reader is referred to the work of Wilson (who says of such movements, 'their adherents expect profound changes in the quality of life in a society in which experience of their techniques becomes widespread' (1976, p. 70)) and that of Robbins, Anthony and Richardson (who report that members of movements of the variety which Wallis has in mind 'often develop instrumental orientations toward moral norms as useful in promoting spiritual awakening but not possessing the status of metaphysical absolutes' (1978, p. 103)).
  - 9 Notice that if higher transformation purposes are taken into account, surface 'affirmation' actually takes the form of practical accommodation.
  - 10 'The sociologist', as Wilson puts it, is 'concerned with patterns rather than with specific contents' (1976, p. 63). But as his own work shows, such patterns must take as many specifics into account as possible.
  - 11 It is true that Wallis clearly states, 'These [definite *types* of new religion] will be presented as ideal types, *not* as mutually exclusive empirical categories' (*op. cit.*, p. 5). But a consequence of the argument presented earlier (that since empirical details taken from particular new religions are used to convey the nature of the ideal types, do not therefore 'approximate' to the types, and so can be used to criticize them) is of course that the details belong to one type or another. Since these details are held to characterize movements themselves, it is not surprising to find Wallis treating particular movements as belonging to particular types. The types often appear to be functioning as mutually exclusive empirical categories. For example, in contrast to the language of ideal types (as in, 'The style of the world-affirming movement' (p. 20)), the plural form found in such expressions as 'world-rejecting movements' (p. 44, my emphasis) strongly suggests that empirical cases are being characterised as such. This is because there is only one world-rejecting ideal type. The tendency for the types to operate at the empirical level is also seen in how they enter into his theorizing (see p. 1).
  - 12 Robbins and Anthony discuss those who hold that, 'The shift of emphasis in the seventies [has been] "from the transformation of society to the transformation of self" (1978:19). Supposedly 'narcissistic' tendencies mean that some movements are indeed peripheral with regard to social transformation. But this does not help support Wallis' world-affirming characterization, and in any case must be balanced against the theme of the transformation of business, etc.
  - 13 There is nothing unusual about this when viewed in the comparative religions



context: see e.g. the discussions of Werblowsky (1976) and Tambiah (1970) as to the interplay of renunciation and affirmation in Buddhist traditions, and why this should be so.

- 14 A great deal could be said about the ways in which theorists in the tradition which Wallis is following have conceptualized and tried to handle these matters (see e.g. Weber 1966, Yinger 1970, Wilson, 1959, 1969, 1976). Responses to the world which come to mind, and I do not present them in any particular order, include: world-affirmation, renunciation, legitimization, rejection, transcendence, transvaluation, improvement, transformation, millennial, indifference, neglect, acceptance, hostility, protest against, apartness, enhancement, revitalization, resignation, and of course the classic Weberian terms, inner-worldly asceticism, world-rejecting asceticism, the response of the contemplative mystic, and so on. To make things even more complicated, it is clearly possible for a movement to respond to different aspects of the world in very different ways: to insulate itself from some aspects, not others; to reject and ignore some aspects but reject and want to change others. A related consideration is that two movements can share the same orientation when it comes to *judging* the nature of life in the world, but can differ in their specific *action* orientations. The sects discussed by Wilson share the same judgement in that they all advocate rejection (1959:5). Actual responses differ widely.

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*Religion* (1985) 15, 99-100

## SHORT REVIEWS AND BOOK NOTES

R. Leuze, *Theologie und Religionsgeschichte: Der Weg Otto Pfleiderers*. Kaiser Verlag, München, 1980, pp.448. N.p.

This monograph traces the thought of Pfleiderer (1839-1908), best known now for *The Development of Protestant Theology in Germany since Kant and in Great Britain since 1825* (1891), through from his early work on the essence and history of religions (1869), and the three editions of his *Religionsphilosophie auf geschichtlicher Grundlage* (1878, 1883-4, 1896). Leuze shows how this last pupil of F. C. Baur maintained as the basis for his Christian theology a conception of religion drawn from Schleiermacher and Hegel, but built into it the knowledge accruing from subsequent historical research and the new sciences of religion. His idealist framework, while constantly being modified (like Troeltsch's, later) in the light of his historical realism, provided a basis for his telling critique of contemporary positivism. He both learned from and influenced Max Müller, while preferring Feuerbach's account of the origins of religion, and offended the Ritschlians by what seemed an over-sympathetic understanding for Buddhism. His New Testament scholarship was not significantly different from that of other leading liberals, but he set these historical conclusions in a wider context. That was unfashionable in Germany, so Pfleiderer was less widely read there than in England and America. Leuze plausibly suggests that following the demise of Ritschlianism and its equally parochial successors a theology open to the scientific study of religion is again discussable, even if Pfleiderer's philosophical premisses are no longer persuasive.

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P. J. Nel: *The Structure and Ethos of the Wisdom Admonitions in Proverbs*. (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 158). W. de Gruyter. Berlin, New York, 1982. p. xii + 142. DM.74.00.

It is surprising that for so long during the present century the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament was left in a situation of relative scholarly neglect. So remarkably has the situation changed since 1970 that the student is now hard pressed to keep abreast of the large numbers of new studies that are appearing. Yet, for all this re-awakened interest, there still remains a surprising lack of consensus concerning the precise social and intellectual location of Wisdom in the society of ancient Israel and the way in which its contents are to be related theologically to other, more obviously central, aspects of ancient Israelite life. Dr P. J. Nel's volume is a dissertation submitted to the University of Tübingen under the direction of Professor H. Gese. It



falls quite distinctly into two parts, the first of which deals with the formal structure of the Wisdom admonition and the second with the ethos of Wisdom in its setting in Israelite society. To these is prefaced a long, and interesting, chapter on the formal structure of the Wisdom sayings of the Old Testament in general. This provides the background to the specific, and highly detailed, analysis of the structure of the admonitions in the Book of Proverbs. In turn the conclusions regarding the setting of these in actual situations provides the basis for the larger conclusions regarding the ethos of Wisdom in Israel as a whole.

Perhaps it needs to be said at the outset that the book is not at all easy to read, no doubt partly as a result of the author's origin in South Africa where he is no doubt more accustomed to writing in Afrikaans, and partly as a consequence of the very tight analysis of literary forms and structures. Not until the reader reaches the final chapter do the reasons why the investigation has pursued the course it has become at all clear. Nevertheless patience and care are well rewarded for this is a valuable and important piece of original research.

Certainly the study is well aware of the issues which have coloured recent study of Old Testament Wisdom. These relate to the seemingly contrasted aspects of Wisdom as a highly specialised, overtly literate, school product which employs highly sophisticated speech-forms, set against a broad, and at times almost naive, family-oriented interest in conventional moral issues. On the one side its employment of highly developed artistic forms of instruction, such as parables, allegories and fables shows skilful artistry and a very polished tradition. Yet on the other side there is a resort to simple, sometimes common-place, and sometimes seemingly self-evident, truths. So scholarly investigation has swung between recognising a very narrow, professional, and almost certainly court-based, circle of scribes as the originators of Wisdom and a larger, diffuse, clan-based interest in popular folk-morality. Nel concludes that we cannot deduce that the broader form of Wisdom admonition has arisen by a process of development from the older forms of wisdom saying with their directions and commands (*contra* f.i. W. Zimmerli). Rather Nel concludes that the form of the admonition has been determined by the life situation in which Wisdom flourished. He goes on to reject J. L. Crenshaw's idea of a family ethos and H. -J. Hermisson's case for a setting in the royal court. Instead he concludes that the Israelite city, with its distinctive concerns, provided the setting for Wisdom.

The concluding chapter argues that Wisdom relates to the created order of life, but that this was in no way opposed to belief in divine revelation. The teaching of Wisdom was regarded as at one with the divinely given teaching of the Torah, so that the two are complementary. The order prescribed in the Law does not differ from that of the created world which we experience around us. So Wisdom has much to say about the roles that insight (Wisdom) and revelation (priestly and prophetic) contribute to an understanding of life and the world order.

Eventually Job and Koheleth protested against the dogma of the Wisdom concept of order, asserting that it offered no absolute system of morality. So Wisdom belongs to a theology of creation and provides an irreplaceable element in Old Testament theology.

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*Religion* (1985) 15, 101

## ANNOUNCEMENT

**International Association for the History of Religions, XVth  
International Congress. University of Sydney, Australia,  
18-23 August 1985**

The theme of the XVth International Congress of the IAHR will be RELIGION AND IDENTITY. There will be the customary keynote addresses (by invitation only), 40-45 minute papers and 20 minute research reports. The Congress will be divided into the usual regional and methodological sections, with the addition of sections covering Australia and the Pacific. Details of all sections are available.

Those wishing to present papers are urged as far as possible to keep within the Congress theme, which is intended to emphasize the role of religion in forming and maintaining individual and group (national, ethnic, sectional, tribal, family) identity. Papers on unrelated subjects will not however be excluded.

Peter D. Masefield, *Organizing Secretary*  
Eric J. Sharpe, *Congress Chairman*

*For registration details, please contact:*  
IAHR Secretariat,  
Department of Religious Studies,  
The University of Sydney,  
Sydney, NSW 2006,  
Australia.



1987, 12, 101

# ANNOUNCEMENT

International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) International Congress, University of Sydney, Australia, 1987

1987, 12, 101

The theme of the 25th International Congress of the IAHR will be RELIGION AND THE FUTURE OF HUMANITY

The Congress will be held at the University of Sydney, Australia, from 1987, 12, 101 to 1987, 12, 101

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*Religion* (1985) 15, 103–129

# THE ĀRYA SAMĀJ IN FIJI

## A MOMENT IN HINDU DIASPORA

### Purusottama Bilimoria

#### THE ROOTS, AND EARLY ARRIVALS

It was perhaps an insignificant historical coincidence that the founding of the Ārya Samāj in India and the more feasible idea of bringing Indians to Fiji both occurred in the year 1875.<sup>1</sup> However, it was not insignificant that the Ārya Samāj—‘the society’ of Āryas—arrived in Fiji with the earliest Indian immigrants, since without the contribution of the Ārya Samāj to the social and cultural growth of Indians in Fiji their history would have read somewhat differently today. Although the first Indians arrived in Fiji in 1879, the Ārya Samāj did not make its presence felt there until after the turn of the century. Individual Ārya Samājists were amongst the early arrivals, perhaps a little disorientated in the new environment and were not able to organise themselves into a firm group that could demand attention and recognition. We must remember the strenuous conditions under the indentured labour system they faced. And the parent organisation in India had hardly been made aware of the plight of individual Ārya Samājists on a distant shore; it therefore could not empathise to a significant extent. After all, the founder of the Ārya Samāj, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, did not want the Samāj to develop into a sectarian order; indeed, he saw his Samāj as something of a challenge to the growth and proliferation of sects and sectarianism in India. As J. T. F. Jordens notes:

‘Dayanand Saraswati wrote a great deal about the sects of Hinduism . . . Large sections of both the first and second editions of his main work, the *Satyārtha Prakāśh*, were devoted to a denunciation of the sects . . . Dayanand concentrated his attack on what he saw as the basic evils of sectarianism: the corruptive, idolatrous deviation from the sacred . . . universal norm of Vedic *dharma*, and the wilful promotion of dividedness and hostility within the Hindu commonwealth . . . He realised that the position of the *gurus* was central in the organization and persistence of the sects; he ridiculed their claims to infallibility, challenged their modicum of real scholarship, and bitterly exposed what he considered to be their moral frailties. His final accusation was that they had created, promoted, and exacerbated dividedness and hostility among the Hindus and made Āryāvarta ‘full of darkness’.<sup>2</sup>

Thus no Ārya Samāj *guru* arrived—not, at least, for a good while—and in



deference to the founder's sentiments, no attempts were made to unify the disparate Ārya devotion, silently pursued in the plantations. However, a copy or two of the *Satyārtha Prakāśh*, regarded to be the near infallible gospel of the Ārya Samāj, had arrived and was being studied eagerly by the few Ārya Samājists that there were.<sup>3</sup> *Satsang*, or prayer meetings, were held privately, and some preaching also began amongst the family and friendship circles that grew. This took place at a rather low-key level, since the European overseers were not keen on the Indians uniting under the banner either of religion or of social rights, even though 'Ārya' (in the title 'Ārya Samāj') carried neither racial (ethnic) nor cultural connotations.

Meanwhile, the movement in India was turning a new leaf in its zealous march towards the revival of Vedic *dharma*—the religion of the Golden Age of the Vedas—mounting opposition and charges of infidelity, corruption and idolatry on the part of rival groups, such as the Sanātān Sabhā, and in particular, the Brahmo Samāj, founded by Ram Mohan Roy, the 'protestant reformist' of Hinduism, in contrast to the more 'catholic' approach of Swami Dayanand. Dayanand was convinced that Āryāvarta 'needed a revolution—spiritual, mental and physical (meaning how things look and appear) which could revive the true Hindu *Dharma*'.<sup>4</sup> One way to achieve this was to weed out the fossils remnant in Āryāvarta's religious literature and practices.

Dayanand undertook numerous *shastrārthas*, religious debates, in which he attempted to demolish the tenets and arguments of rival Hindu orders. He rejected, for instance, image-worship and complex forms of ceremonies, all forms of non-dual Vedānta (belief in personal god and dualism of self and the ultimate); he decried mistreatment of women, condemned *sātī* (burning of widow at the deceased husband's pyre), and childhood marriage. The Ārya Samāj stood for struggle against caste divisions, exploitation of women and children and the underprivileged; it upheld conversion of non-Hindus, social reforms, and education of women. Amongst the scriptures, Dayanand dismissed the worth of *Purāṇas* and *Tantric* texts, since these are not *Ārsha Granthas*,<sup>5</sup> the true scriptures of the Hindus. He rejected even the *Bhāgavat Purāṇa*, a favourite of popular Hinduism, and he deplored Saiva texts since they glorified the worship of *Śiva-līṅgam*, apparently the generative organ of Śiva.

Dayanand put a lot of his thoughts on these issues in writing; of course, they were not received by his contemporaries without controversy, sometimes scandal. The most famous debate took place in Kashi, Banares, undoubtedly the seat of Hindu orthodox learning. He wrote several other works in Sanskrit and Hindi, which his followers devoured with succour. Of course, not a few reached Fiji until much later, and there was hardly one learned scholar who could interpret the detailed works to the average



follower. Nevertheless, these works were to influence and set the trend for the nature of religious confrontations in Fiji in due course. For he had provided the terms of reference, as it were, in his iconoclastic writings and had given the *raison d'être* for belief in the *Vedic dharma* that he so earnestly championed against all other interpretations of Hinduism.

### THE INDENTURED YEARS

Dayanand died in 1883, but the movement he bequeathed to his followers grew from strength to strength; it helped inspire, in its fervent striving towards self-discovery, self-affirmation, and quest for an identity, the 'renaissance' spirit that was sweeping through India in late nineteenth century. But this could hardly have been a concern of the expatriate Indians knee-deep in the muddy plantations in the rural outbacks of Fiji. How could they share the feeling of a nascent India and join in the struggle for reform when their plight and future was in such dismal disarray? Was Fiji a land they could identify with? Could they consider the land as their rightful home? As a second India? Did it have a tradition and heritage that could be fruitfully revived? And could they profitably involve themselves in such a 're-awakening'? Or perhaps, was there not sufficient heritage in their blood-streams, so to speak, and in whatever little wisdom they had brought with them from 'back home'? As Ken Gillion observes, 'India was far away, in indenture days, the immigrants were without traditional leaders and teachers, few educated people had come to Fiji and some of these had returned to India, and only a handful of people arrived from India in later years to serve as leaders and keep the Fiji Indians in touch with life in the motherland and these too often brought dissension, not cultural unity. Yet, although the intensity of the influence from India was not great, they came at a critical time in the history both of India and of the Fiji Indians'.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, the condition of the indentured labourers was deplorable, and remained so for a few years. The basic elements of even a family unit were lacking, let alone of a cohesive communal force. Hannah Dudley, an Australian missionary worker, who had arrived in Fiji in 1897 to work amongst Indian women, found their state and suffering to be almost unbearable.<sup>7</sup> The social chaos created by the selective distribution of Indian immigrants was later summed up in a report by C. F. Andrews and Pearson. They observed that the Indians appeared to behave in rather extraordinary ways:

For they have never been accustomed to live as individuals. They have been used to the communal life. Women in India are all married at a very early age, and they are bound up with their families and their homes. Men also in India are usually married early and their life is bound up with their community. To recruit a man here and a woman there, and to send them out to Fiji, away from all their



communal and family ties, is certain to lead to misery in India and also to immorality in Fiji.<sup>8</sup>

This was cause enough for alarm. One would presume that here was a fertile field for the Ārya Samāj to wage its battle against social injustices, iniquities, and blatant violation of not only Hindu but basic human rights. Although the Indian population at large succumbed mostly to these conditions and did not press collectively for their rights, concern certainly grew among individuals and pockets of settlers, who would attempt to take a stance on these issues, often without much success. The local Ārya Samājists were amongst these most concerned. But they had not organised themselves.

It was in these unsettling days that a group of Ārya Samājists gathered in a house in December 1904,<sup>9</sup> in Samabula Suva. The meeting was organised by Babu Mangal Singh and attended by Biharilal, Gaji Pratap Singh, George Nanku, urged on by Pt. Shiudutt Sharma, fresh from India, who was subsequently installed as the preacher-in-residence in the house donated by Mangal Singh to the Fiji chapter of Ārya Samāj. Shiudutt Sharma was later to extend his hand in education, as indeed the Ārya Samāj in Fiji was to at large. There were only a few members at first, but as Gillion points out, the Ārya Samāj 'was more important, not because of members, but because its leaders demonstrated concern with more than the outward show of religion and the gaining of disciples'<sup>10</sup>—as the sects prominent in those times seemed most interested in. The Kabir and Ramananda Panthis, the Nānak Panthi and the Sanātan sect had solicited considerable following; their pandits and leaders had come from India, and were influential.<sup>11</sup> But it cannot be said that the Ārya Samāj was not ambitious. Why then could it not gain a large enough following to combat the forces that were bringing hardship on its people? The rejection of the caste system should itself have been a promise to many for a better social system; the emphasis on education and social advancement, a call for progress presumably; and the simplification of the complex ritualistic worship, an appeal to a revitalised Hinduism suitable to the new environment. What then happened? Was the morale of the people so low that they saw no hope in the promises held out by the Ārya Samāj? Or was it that, since Ārya Samāj rejected many of the more tangible and sacred symbols of orthodoxy its appeal was less than might even be compensated by the projected social advancements? But the Ārya Samāj was not without some success; converts were quickly gained among the rich and the poor, the influential and the meek, the farmer and the pandit. The impetus came from Indra Narayan; by 1908 land was purchased in Samabula for a temple and a school to be erected. Despite the promises, the caste system and the trappings of orthodoxy did not quite disappear in the life-form of the growing Ārya Samāj community—although their role never quite became central in the lives of the immigrants.<sup>12</sup>



### EDUCATIONAL DEMANDS

The most distressing situation, however, facing the Indians then was the persistence of the inhumane indenture system, or '*girmīt*' as it came to be known to the locals, and the lack of adequate attention to the specific needs of the educational future of their children. The Ārya Samāj was of course being met by opposition from rival factions within the community, that were sensitive to the zeal evidenced in the Ārya Samāj reform strategies. But the Ārya Samāj remained determined in its struggle against what was generally considered by the victims to be social evils—and not merely the finesse of sectarian disputes. The apparent militancy that came to be associated with the zeal and fervour of the Ārya Samāj in India undoubtedly helped it to make its presence felt in the community, and in the colony at large. It pressed for discussion on the glaring issues of the day—in particular, the exploitation in the plantations, the abuse of labour, denial of franchise and representations in the ruling bodies, the neglect in educational matters, and so forth. The Ārya Samāj presented its platform as the champion of at least two of the four fundamental deontological ends of Hinduism—*viz.* *artha* and *dharma*. The former involved means of livelihood (*pēt*), which entailed better opportunities, education and welfare; the latter concerned the religious rites and duties, and entailed *īzzat* or 'honour', sought in the reformation of the social reality. It was inevitable that demands would arise, in keeping with these tenets, in meetings, inspired by Ārya Samāj for action in the area of education along traditional lines so that the cherished values of the tradition did not get eclipsed by the increasingly Europeanised environment. The Ārya Samāj railed against the dominant British culture in the islands, which it found to be stifling. Some members, however, were receptive to its appeal and sought to gain advantages from it, sometimes by working within its institutions.<sup>13</sup> But such overtures were not to continue for too long, since sensitivity had begun to run high, particularly with regard to the absence of educational facilities in the Indian community. Individual family members had kept up the practice of teaching the rudiments of language to their offspring. But clearly, the needs were growing with the increase of the infant population, both immigrant and local born. As early as 1886 the government had considered providing education for Indian children but was not able to meet the needs.

Consequently, a generation of Fiji-born Indians had no schooling.<sup>14</sup> By far the largest number of schools were being run by Christian missions, and except for a few like Hannah Dudley, most teachers recruited had strong sectarian leanings. And although they focused mostly on the 'uplift' of the native population, they had begun to admit Indian children who were orphans or without proper parental care. By 1898 the schools established by Marist Brothers and one by Miss Dudley began to admit Indian pupils;



though the parents were reluctant to send their children to Christian schools for fear of losing them to the Christian faith. This apprehension was reinforced when Indian (Christian) priests were brought out from India to inculcate Christian teachings to the Indian pupils. There were cases of conversion too.<sup>15</sup> The Hindu populace, by and large, took offence at this impertinence, since it reminded them of the all-too-familiar Macaulay system experienced by immigrants in their early days in India. The search therefore turned to alternative means of education for their children, since the government also was not going to be interested in the education of the 'East Indian', brought to Fiji merely in order to fulfil the unskilled labour needs, and no more. The initiative was taken by two Indians, one a Sanātani and the other an Ārya, namely, Sri Rampal Singh and Pt. Badri Maharaj. The schools they opened are said to be the earliest schools by Indians for their children in Fiji<sup>16</sup>. Badri Maharaj had arrived in 1894, via Singapore, after serving his indenture in Penang. He built a native-styled house in his village in the rural areas of Ra in 1898, and began classes for Indian children, of both sexes. One of the prodigal candidates was to be Dr Ram Lakhan, who became a prominent statesman. Badri Maharaj also took the unprecedented step of sending his sons to New Zealand to further their studies at the secondary level. Although an *avant-garde* in the field of education, he remained sober and conservative in the political field, which he entered eventually.

It was not until 1918, however, that a firmly planned school was established as a community institution. This step again was taken by the Ārya Samāj and hence it was not be a mere school, but a *gurukul*: the Ārya Samāj's answer to the rather stifling modern educational establishment inherited from the West. The idea of the *gurukul* had been conceived by members of the Ārya Samāj in India, who wanted their children trained in accordance with the educational philosophy of Dayanand Saraswati.<sup>17</sup> Its vital function was to create an Ārya elite by educating the relatively backward sectors, and in this way to transform society, thus paving the way for the emergence of the ideal Ārya society.<sup>18</sup> The programme in a *gurukul* was envisaged ideally to include Sanskrit learning and mastery of ancient Indian, especially Vedic, history, since it is there that the greatness of India is to be found. Since 1900 the *gurukul* system had been operating successfully in India, and understandably its desirability rated high among the Ārya Samājists in Fiji. A convention in 1916 resolved to establish a *gurukul* in Saweni, near Lautoka, on the western side.

The credit for the establishment of the *gurukul* went to Swami Manoharananda Saraswati, an Ārya Samāj preacher who came out from India in 1913, possibly the first to be involved in the initiation of educational programmes in some depth.<sup>19</sup> Here began the landmark in the long and



florid legacy of the Samāj's contribution to education in Fiji, and towards the emancipation of women from the traditional bondage of early marriage and deprivation of opportunities in the fields of education and work on a par with men. The single service done in this respect is celebrated and acknowledged ceremoniously.<sup>19a</sup> It would appear that Swami Shraddhananda, who succeeded the founder, Dayanand, wanted to ensure that the ablest persons were posted in Ārya Samāj communities, wherever they might be, so as to maximise the achievement of the Ārya ideals. Swami Manoharananda took an interest in *gurukuls* in India. He also took a hand in journalism and edited the Hindi section of *The Indian Settler*.<sup>20a</sup>

### SWAMI MANOHARANANDA

The initial reaction on the part of the wider Indian community was one of apprehension. The emphasis in the *gurukul* seemed to be heavily placed on the Ārya creed. Gradually, however, some sectors of the community, although divided at large, gained confidence, and pledged support by sending their children to the *gurukul*. A good deal of Hindi, but also a bit of Sanskrit, was taught; even appreciation classes in Christianity were introduced. The Indian community had one good reason to be satisfied with the progress—namely, the abstracted culture, superimposed by the dominant Anglo-European environment, was now being superseded by a more concrete milieu that was directly relevant to the tradition and its concomitant values, and of use to the generation whose needs education must cater to. Of course, the context had altered somewhat since the arrival of Indians to Fiji, and therefore the application of the basic principles would need to be modified to suit the prevailing conditions. It would appear that there was a degree of enlightenment even on this crucial point, and that all forms of rigid dogmatism were eschewed. The evidence for this is in the admittance of native Fijian pupils who were trained in a manner that did not militate against their own heritage. Indeed, one such pupil from the *gurukul* was to become a leading statesman of some standing in the dominion—viz. Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna.<sup>20</sup> A school dedicated *in memoriam* to the knighted chief should also be a tribute to the classroom where he began his earliest learning.

The educational drive amongst the Indians instituted by the Ārya Samāj gained momentum steadily for the next decade. A few more schools and *Kanyā Pāthsālas* (girls' schools) were established in different regions. The fervour cooled when communal strife began once again to take its toll on the Indian community, now more severely than ever before. Rival community groups clamoured for their own educational and welfare institutes. For instance, the Muslims naturally wished to see their children equipped with Urdu and Arabic, rather than with Hindi and Sanskrit. Under such pressures, Swami



Manoharananda's influence and popularity declined. The Swami's commitment to his special religious status also lapsed as he took a youthful wife, sanctified not by the Ārya but by the Sanātani rites. He left the Samāj and after flirtations for a while with the Sanātani group, took to Christianity, much to the consternation of fellow Hindus.<sup>21</sup>

Prior to the period in which Swami Manoharananda enjoyed the height of his popularity with the Ārya Samājists, another religious expatriate had arisen to considerable prominence in the Indian community, albeit as a champion of the Indians' cause against the oppressive conditions under the indenture system. He was Totaram Sanadhya. Although a Sanātani, Totaram Sanadhya did not fan the flame of discord allegedly instilled by the Ārya Samāj activists, especially in the Ārya-Sanātani quarrels, which remained relatively innocuous in the early stages. Totaram had arrived as an indentured labourer in 1893. He became a self-trained pandit, versed in Hindi, commanding a sizeable following of his own. His shrewd and penetrating observations of the conditions of Fiji Indians were later published in a book in Hindi—*Fiji Dwip Men Mere Ikkīs Varsh (My Twenty-one years in Fiji Islands)*<sup>22</sup>—which he virtually narrated, upon his return to India, to Banarsidas Chaturvedi, himself an ardent champion of the rights of Indians settled abroad. While in Fiji and in India, Totaram campaigned for the abolition of the indenture system, and for better conditions of employment and treatment of the Indians on the part of the colonial agents and expatriate companies, such as the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR). Totaram even ventured over to Australia in a steamer in the hope, perhaps, of either putting pressure on the Australian powers—that-be to support his cause, or of gaining the sympathy and support of the Indians settled here. He was discouraged by the humiliating racialist overtones he encountered and the unhappy incidents these led to, though he took them rather humorously.<sup>22a</sup> This was in the early 1910s. He finally left Fiji in 1913, for Gandhi's ashram in India. His departure created a vacuum in the leadership in the Indian community.

### MANILAL DOCTOR

But already a man had arrived who was well suited to assume the leadership of the disgruntled settlers. A series of spectacular events followed his arrival, which also led eventually to the end of his career in Fiji. Though somewhat cantankerous, this towering figure in a white turban, symbolising patriotism to India, was much respected by Indians. Manilal Maganlal Doctor, known popularly as Doctor Manilal, (who really was not a doctor of any sort but) an English-trained lawyer and an Ārya Samājist himself. He had spent a number of years, first, with his wife in Gandhi's Tolstoy ashram in South Africa, but then moved to Mauritius, in 1907, where he stirred up an



enormous struggle for the rights of Indians.<sup>23</sup> Manilal had kept in touch with Gandhi, whom he had thought of serving in South Africa. But he was being effective in Mauritius, where he acquired experience in waging campaigns against the ill-treatment of Indian labourers, and for the elevation of the labouring class from their status as second-class citizens. He longed for the emergence of a society where overseas Indians could achieve progress and play their legitimate role in national affairs. He founded a paper called the *Hindustani*, which boasted the motto, in the spirit of the French revolution: 'Liberty of Individuals; Fraternity of Man's Equality, and Equality of Races'.<sup>24</sup> Manilal was also influential in the setting up of a Royal Commission in 1909 which helped to alleviate the lot of the plantation workers. There was no doubt that Manilal was by far the strongest force in championing the Indians' cause in Mauritius, although his views were criticised as being exaggerated and too virulent.<sup>25</sup> Thirty years later Manilal was to be likened to one of the 'heroes of Mahābhārata', and was acknowledged for his gigantic task in helping Indians to secure a foothold on the political ladder in Mauritius.<sup>26</sup> Not only that, but the Ārya Samāj establishment in Mauritius remembered him for the assistance he rendered to the local Indians in laying the foundation of the Ārya Samāj movement, which was to play an important role in the social and political affairs of the country.<sup>27</sup> His 'calling' in the Ārya Samāj was continued by another Indian intellectual, Kashinath, himself influenced profoundly by Manilal. The latter was convinced that Ārya Samāj was the best sect for overseas Indians since it concerned itself with the social and political advancement of its people, and did not become preoccupied with outmoded forms of worship and social structure that orthodox Hinduism seemed to be weighed down by. In fact, the Ārya Samāj sought to do away with the complex of rituals and dogmas of orthodoxy, whose incongruity in the altered context of overseas Indian settlements could not have been more glaring. Manilal thought he had a surfeit of experience and acquaintance with the situation of overseas Indians to be able to put up a struggle for their cause elsewhere. He may have counted a few too many more eggs than had hatched, so to speak, while deciding to take on the post in Fiji, for which he departed in September 1911. But it is understandable why he considered himself particularly qualified, while Gandhi attempted to dissuade him from taking on the post. He persuaded himself that his services in view of his experience and knowledge were wanted and therefore would be invaluable to the Fiji Indian. For after all, his motives, at least, were in keeping with the banner Gandhi himself had raised, again expressed in an article in *Young India* in 1919, in these words, 'The question of our overseas countrymen was of more immediate importance that even the all absorbing question of reforms'.<sup>28</sup> The National Congress members, under Gandhi, had become concerned about the plight



of Indians in Fiji, and had promised to send a suitable English-educated patriot who would further their cause. The correspondence concerning this was published in the *Indian Opinion*, which at once caught the attention of Manilal, whereupon he nominated himself for the post.<sup>29</sup>

Manilal arrived with a creole mistress he had taken in Mauritius.<sup>30</sup> His legal Indian wife arrived later. This incident did his image little good, and being a Gujarati did not enable him to solicit support across the Indian populace. In Fiji, Manilal was regarded with suspicion by the government; he was even considered a clandestine 'agent' sent by Gandhi, determined to uproot the indenture system. Manilal attempted to do a good deal for the Indians, but his dealings came under scrutiny and he faced opposition.<sup>30a</sup> He wrote about the conditions of Indians and sent reports to India and London. He edited the briefly lived monthly *Indian Settler* in 1917.<sup>31</sup> Manilal had miscalculated the relatively low level of development of the Indian community in Fiji, which was infantile in comparison to the maturity and cohesiveness of the Indians in Mauritius. The Ārya Samāj, too, was better organised and equipped in Mauritius than it was ever to be in Fiji. For instance, the likes of Dr Bhardwaja,<sup>32</sup> or the calibre of Kashinath were not to be seen in Fiji. Pt. Amichandra, who was to come much later to Fiji, was a scholar, but much less so than Dr Bhardwaja. Manilal proved to be a weak spokesman for the Ārya Samāj; he achieved little for the society as such, if he did not arouse the hostility of Muslims and Christians.<sup>33</sup> There was one force he had to contend with in Fiji that he had not come across in Mauritius, and sometimes he did not know how to deal with it. That was the Australian European influence: there were Australian companies, overseers and agents who managed affairs in ways different to their more diplomatic British counterpart. The battle was a difficult one, and understandably so. He failed to gain nomination to the Legislative Council on the Indian ticket—which went instead to his rival Badri Maharaj. Manilal responded by forming the Indian Imperial Association, with Babu Ram Singh as its secretary.

#### PANDIT BADRI MAHARAJ AND THE 1920 STRIKE

A most delicate situation arose in 1920 with the growing unrest of the plantation workers, some of whom were native Fijians. A series of delicate incidents led to a general strike by the workers, which in turn resulted in skirmishes between the police and a group of workers. One person died by a police-fired bullet. Pandit Badri Maharaj, somewhat contrary to his Ārya Samāj heritage, appealed to the strikers and picketers to curtail their militant stance.<sup>33a</sup> The strike was called off. But the repercussions of the 1920 strike were ominous. Manilal was implicated in the agitation, since he was branded an 'agent' of Gandhi. His curious defence against incriminating threats from the Government took the form of the claim that he was a citizen of the State



of Baroda, and therefore could not be deposed under the Colonial law. However, in defiance of the differential identity, an expulsion order was passed against him and a few other recalcitrant 'non-cooperation' agitators.<sup>34</sup> With the utmost indignation and show of rebellion Manilal passed out of Fiji and returned to India *via* New Zealand. The Ārya Samāj lost yet another promising leader, who inadvertently flanked the flames of discontent among the Indians, but also nurtured the seeds of discord amongst the people. Gillion sums up the loss succinctly:<sup>35</sup>

As Manilal was the only significant leader the Indians in Fiji had before 1920, it was unfortunate that he was not a man who commanded the general respect of government officers and other Europeans who dealt with him, though it must be said in his favour that anyone who questioned the established racial order in Fiji would not have found relations with them easy, whatever his character.

The Ārya Samāj was held culpable for the seemingly restless state of the Indians; and sections within the community also blamed Ārya Samāj for its unrepresentative banner. The CSR, for instance, identified a certain group of Indian leaders who were engaged in corrupt practices of exploitation of the growers and plantation workers, and who were now making the demand for a higher price for sugar cane: 'These men', the company's inspector reported, 'are also the leaders of the local Indian society—the Arya Samaj . . .'<sup>36</sup> The various communal groups, identified by their cultural-regional background, had begun to stand more firmly on their own feet and did not need the voice of Ārya Samāj to speak for their grievances. In particular, tension and conflict arose between Muslims and Hindus, which in part reflected the growing distance between the two groups in India. Hindus objected to the slaughter of cows, which the Muslims began to practise less discreetly and in spite of strong Ārya Samāj condemnation.<sup>37</sup> Would the British step into the wedge that emerged and exploit it to instigate its 'divide and rule' policy, as was becoming prominent in other colonies, dominions, and in the Rāj? But there was sufficient distance and division between the Indians and the Fijians for the government to want to proliferate further disharmony for the sake of wielding greater power over the community. A 'partition', therefore, was not a likely occurrence in Fiji; at least there were no signs of it in the early 1920s. The Indians were more or less united on the evils of the indenture system and the future of the Indians in Fiji overall. They were supported and encouraged in their struggle by the mounting agitation on their behalf in India. The Government of India was pressured to institute an inquiry. Gandhi was vehement in his pronouncement on this issue. 'It is clearly a matter of terrorizing the present Indian population into slavish submission to the white exploiters'; he compared the situation to 'Amritsar'.<sup>37a</sup>

Manilal's agitation did achieve, directly or indirectly, one positive



landmark, and a very crucial one in the history of Fiji—viz., the abolition of the indenture system. Of course, the full credit cannot go to Manilal for this—as perhaps the little that was owed to Wilberforce for the abolition of slavery almost a century earlier. For, to be sure, there were others who were equally involved and to an extent influential in this drive. One was the Reverend C. F. Andrews, who had visited Fiji twice, hailed there as a '*Deen Bandhu*', friend of the people, and had been reporting on the moral conditions of Indians in Fiji to Gandhi, and through the Congress to the rest of the Empire. Attempts were made to discredit his reports, and malign him as another 'agent' of Gandhi set to shake the efficient progress of the commonwealth.<sup>38</sup> But Andrews was not a protégé of Gandhi; he had continuing relations with the Ārya Samāj in India, in particular with its leader Swami Shraddhananda<sup>39</sup>, and had kept up his contact with Tagore as well; Tagore and Gandhi certainly did not see eye-to-eye on everything, although Tagore did not appear to have been as vocal about the situation in Fiji as he was about the problems in Mauritius.<sup>40</sup>

After much deputation and strife the indenture system came to an end in early 1920s. Indians were free either to return to India, or to settle into a life-style of their 'choice' in Fiji, although severely restricted by the prevailing atmosphere of prejudices and principles on the part of the Europeans. The vast majority, who had by now a locally-born generation to take care of, opted for the latter. But the economic conditions were not the best, the price of sugar cane was well below the mark, and conditions of labour had scarcely improved. The Indians who began settling on the land or stepping into trade, commerce and agriculture were intimidated by the powerful control the Government and the European agents, including solicitors, exercised in the land.<sup>41</sup>

### SADHU BASHISHTH MUNI AND THE 1921 STRIKE

What price freedom? one might well ask, as surely the Indian leaders were asking—one of whom stood out to be quite remarkable, even if one of the most mysterious personalities to have emerged hitherto in Fiji. This was a *sadhu* (mendicant) by the name of Bashishth (*Sans.* *Vaśiṣṭh*) Muni. Shree Sadhu Bashishth Muni was a yogi of a sort and a '*mahātma*' to Sanātān Dharma.<sup>42</sup> Though he championed intersectorian debates, his nobility and humility, however, helped to close rather than extenuate the gap existing between the Ārya Samāj and other Hindu groups. He stressed Gandhi's method of non-violent protest and non-cooperation, and involved himself in utmost dedication to the service and upliftment of the rural Indians. He was another social worker who was taken to be an emissary of Gandhi by the government. It appears he had heard about the plight of Indians in Fiji and decided to come to give them a hand in their struggle; but he was not sent by Gandhi.<sup>43</sup>

Interestingly enough he came via Australia, and seemed to have had



contacts with the Australian labour movement, which was perhaps evinced in the sorts of libertarian demands he made, for the Indians, from the CSR, in a deputation during a strike that soon followed the 1920 all-out strike.<sup>44</sup> But the Gandhian spirit was also there: the Sadhu was able to mobilise a large group of non-violent youths, who would assemble like a battery of soldiers, prepared to follow his orders. He involved them in peaceful welfare work, much needed during the 1921 strike that had started in the Ba region. One of his foremost right-hand men was Pt. Shivdayal Maharaj, a brahmin indentured immigrant, who was equally concerned with the Indian problems, but had worked his way up to be a *sardār*, a plantation foreman, and was on moderately good terms with the CSR.<sup>45</sup> What the Sadhu taught the Indians was important. He gave them a sense of fraternity, an identity of equality with the domineering Europeans, and a strength which Indians all over the Empire had harnessed for themselves in their effort to free the Indian spirit from the bondage of two or so centuries of colonial impoverishment,<sup>46</sup>—but in accordance with the principles of *ahimsā* and *satyagraha*. The 1921 strike was accordingly less chaotic and destructive than the 1920 strike had proved to be. Its virtues were to be extolled later in a Sydney paper, which read: 'The Solidity of Indians in the struggle was amazing. It was marked by absence of any attempt to run foul of the Law of the Colony'.<sup>47</sup> But the Sadhu was not to remain much longer in Fiji to continue his good work. A petition, worded in English, that demanded the removal of Bashishth Muni from Fiji, bearing signatures of Indians, was submitted to the Governor. But the illiterate Indians had been beguiled into signing the petition they were told demanded the Sadhu's *retention* in Fiji against rumours of an impending deportation order—which, or course, became a reality after the signatures were solicited.<sup>48</sup> This was a great loss, greater than even incurred by the departure of Manilal. But the Sadhu left behind a spirit that was imbibed, so to speak, by his followers, a number of whom continued his work and have kept the memory of the Sadhu's noble presence in Fiji glowing to this day.<sup>49</sup>

#### COMMUNAL RIFTS: ĀRYA, SANĀTAN AND 'OTHER' DHARMAS.

The Ārya Samāj did appear to have learnt a lesson, and since permits to intending preachers from India were being refused by the government, the Samāj looked more to its own home-bred leaders. In 1926 Badri Maharaj emerged into the limelight again, appointed to the legislative council.<sup>50</sup> He was soon eclipsed by Pt. Vishnu Deo, a locally born and educated Ārya Samāj leader who gained considerable stature in the social and political life of Fiji. But the community seemed to have reorientated its focus after the events of the early 20s. Gillion makes the point that:



The abolition of the indenture system and the strikes of 1920 and 1921 had been big events in the life of the Fiji Indians. But following the enforced departure of Manilal, the deportation of Bashishth Muni, the visit of the deputation from India, and the agitation over the residential tax, the interest of the leading Fiji Indians turned from industrial and political action to religious and social questions.<sup>51</sup>

Rifts emerged between the Indian Christians and Hindus, between Hindus and Muslims and between North Indian and South Indian sections. The Ārya Samāj did not spare its critics, whether they were orthodox Hindus, or Christians, or Muslims, and concentrated its efforts in the areas of preaching, education, and the revival of *dharma*, which apparently lay in much ruin.<sup>52</sup> Ārya Samāj schools selected candidates to be sent to India for further training. Some joined the nationalists' struggle with Gandhi and Nehru in India; the Ārya Young Men's Association was even formed locally.<sup>53</sup> In the mid-20s another major school came to prominence in Lautoka, in the Namoli village, run by Sri M. N. Naidu, whom Pt. Vishnu Deo assisted for a while before he moved to Suva. The newly appointed Governor expressed interest in the education of the Indians. 'This aspiration of a people who adhere to the great faiths of the East is one which commands my sympathy.'<sup>53</sup> But the Europeans generally remained opposed to Indian education, and there was still no secondary school for Indians; those who could afford it preferred to send their eligible sons to India, or to New Zealand, but not to the mission and government schools.<sup>54</sup> The Ārya Samājists clamoured for a more Hinduised curriculum, and a more Sanskritic form of Hindi than had been made available in primary schools. They rejected the *Hindustani Handbook* advocated by the Education authorities.<sup>55</sup> Again, the Ārya Samāj showed indignation towards the attempt to implant an abstracted form of Indian culture and learning while the demand clearly was for a more concretised form, that would gradually also transform the very conditions to which the Indians had to adapt and become adjusted to. Where the older generation had compromised and succumbed to the altered conditions of the Fijian climate, so to say, the younger generation was to be protected from being moulded by this circumstantial context, not having had acquaintance with any other.

The Ārya Samāj propagated its ideals through its major publications, '*Fiji Samāchār*', which Pt. Shiudutt Sharma had helped to found, and their newsletter, '*Vaidik Sandesh*'.<sup>56</sup> The Ārya press was controversial, to say the least. A school teacher from the Rewa area issued a challenge in the '*Vaidik Sandesh*' with a reward of fifty pounds to whoever succeeded in refuting the Vedic essence of Ārya Samāj. Of course, he stood to defend the Ārya Samāj. Much debate was evoked as a consequence, and Hindus from various sects became embroiled in this call. But when the time came for a showdown on



the dais, the Ārya who had thrown the challenge disappeared from the arena.<sup>57</sup> Vacuous confrontations of this sort infuriated the authorities, with the result that a ban was put on the entry of preachers from abroad, whether they be Hindus or Muslims. And the Ārya Samāj was attacked from a rival press set up by a Scottish doctor, who saw himself as something of a redeemer of the Indian people. His weekly called '*Vṛiddhi*', later changed to '*Vṛddhi-Vānī*', solicited the assistance of one Pandit Durga Prasad,<sup>58</sup> and carried items subtly incriminating the Ārya Samājists, especially its founder Swami Dayanand. The days of Manilal Doctor were looked upon with nostalgia.

Manilal was succeeded by Shivabhai Bhailalbhāi Patel, who was with Gandhi earlier and corresponded with Pollock in the Foreign Office in London. Shivabhai Patel was not an Ārya Samājist, and was more sensitive to the unscrupulous way in which Manilal had incited rifts in sections in the community, and among the sects. He wrote of the conflict between the Ārya Samāj and the Indian Reform League, a new organisation that wanted to fight for reform and youthful transformation. Shivabhai kept clear of the conflict, local dissensions and, moreover, the mean and petty quarrels between different sections of the community, since he had also to outlive the reputation of the deposed Manilal.<sup>59</sup> He found support and assistance in his young colleague Ambalal Dahyabhai ('A.D.') Patel, a fellow Gujarati lawyer trained in England, later to become a major force in Fiji's independence movement and in disputations involving cane farmers and the sugar mills.

#### KANYĀ PĀTHSĀLAS AND EDUCATION

Much, however, was still being achieved in the educational and social spheres by the Ārya Samāj despite the opposition and controversies the leaders ran into. Gopendra Narayan Pathik, who had come from India in 1925, with his wife, Srimati Kamla Devi, met with considerable success in their joint and life-long dedication to the improvement of education of Indians. They left behind quite a legacy in the students they trained, some of whom Pathik took to India during his visits for admission into Ārya institutes there.<sup>59a</sup> By 1930 there were about three *Ārya Pāthsālas* in Fiji.<sup>60</sup> By the time of Andrew's next visit, in 1936, considerably more progress had been made. He commended the efforts of the Ārya Samāj, along with other sects, in glowing words:<sup>61</sup>

The new education now given in Ārya Samāj and Sanatan Dharma schools and also in Mission and Government schools has already covered 42 per cent of the Indian boys and 20 per cent of the Indian girls.

Andrews was clearly struck by the seemingly rapid recovery of *dharma* and moral *fibre* among the Indians in Fiji: 'the recovery has been equally



astonishing and the splendid schools built by the different religious bodies with Government aid are filled with healthy, bright, and physically well-developed children'.<sup>62</sup> He describes a school run by the Ārya Samāj in which girls ranging from the age of six to fourteen were being taught by Indian women teachers clad in beautiful *sāris*: 'On the blackboards were lessons in Hindi. Each day begins and ends with prayer. While I was present the children sang to me their Hindi *bhajans* (devotional songs)'.<sup>63</sup> Had the concrete culture, so much thirsted after, returned to the Hindus? Were the Ārya Samāj leaders going to acquiesce in their cherished achievements now? It appeared not, since there were other issues, mainly of religious nature, that still divided the Hindus. This brings us to the discussion of four or five important figures, before the end of the 1930s, whose efforts and disputes marked the end of a significant chapter in the history of Ārya Samāj in Fiji. With the exception of Pt. Vishnu Deo, the others had come from India. Pt. Amichandra Vidyalkar had arrived in 1928, and was immediately involved in the educational issues rampant in his time. He was a protagonist of an all-girls school, which he began in the Ārya temple precinct with six girls in the class, in the face of opposition from fellow Samājists. Eventually, the school got going, and other schools were established along the lines of the model he initiated. But more significantly, Pt. Amichandra was to contribute towards the rectification of the impoverished state of Hindi learning in Fiji. The Europeans had patronised a thoroughly watered-down version of *Fiji-bāl* or Hindustani, as we noted earlier, which was perhaps expedient for the colloquial *lingua franca* in the plantation fields, but could hardly be a medium for teaching and cultivated learning. Pt. Amichandra was responsible for devising and writing a set of prescribed texts for Hindi, in Hindi, in locally published editions which are widely used to this day for instruction in institutions in Fiji and those Pacific islands where Hindi is taught.<sup>64</sup> But for one incident where Pt. Amichandra's skills in Sanskrit were called upon, his character remained untarnished in Fiji. We shall come to this incident shortly. In the meantime, he concentrated his efforts with the Ārya Samāj stronghold in Ba, the second after Suva, where an *Ārya Kanyā Pāthsālā* was also set up, in 1938.

### HINDU-MUSLIM RIFT

By the late 1920s the Ārya Samāj had managed to wield considerable power in the Hindu community. A major organisation, the Hindu Mahā Sabhā, purportedly bringing the Hindus together, was established in Suva, but controlled largely by the Ārya Samājists. To take their cause a step further, Pandit Sri Krishna Sharma was sent from India in 1926, and received by the Ārya Pratinidhi Sabhā of Fiji.<sup>65</sup> He wandered through the colony preaching,



chanting, and attempting to inspire the Hindus to bring their quarrelling to an end, presumably by pledging support to the Hindu Mahā Sabhā. But not all Hindus were enchanted by his charisma: and the Muslims, whose hostility he helped evoke, were angered by his presence, despite the appearance that the majority of Hindus rallied behind him. The secretary of the newly formed Fiji Muslim League communicated the following allegations to the government:

The credulous Hindoos are mere tools in the hands of the Arya Samajists who ostensibly champion the Hindoo cause but really aspire, as has been proved in this colony and elsewhere, for something beyond the realm of their religion. The bulk of Hindoos are carried away by the charms of the music of the Arya Missionary (Pundit Sree Krishna Sharma) whose harmonium acts as a magic wand to their less intelligent minds.<sup>65</sup>

Unbeknown to the erstwhile Pandit, tension was also mounting in the Sanātān sect against the Ārya Samāj, and at any moment public confrontation could break out as was becoming a rule in India—not any longer an exception, as in the early history of the Indian community in Fiji. Sri Krishna Sharma left for India for a visit but was not allowed back by the government; perhaps for the better, since the risks were too high for expatriate preachers to attempt to return all Hindus under one banner to the glory of some ancient past. After Sri Krishna Sharma, no other Ārya Samāj preacher from India fulfilled the same role as he did. The local-born Ārya Samājists had trained themselves either in Fiji or in India to take over most of the religious roles, such as those of the marriage celebrant, the officiating priest in *havan* (fire-oblation) and various other religious rites mandatory to the Ārya Samājists.<sup>67</sup>

The Sanātān Dharma Sabhā of Fiji was gradually gathering strength and could hold its own by the time religious debates began to be initiated by the Ārya Samāj. Pt. Murarilal Sastri was brought out by the Sanātānis from India to preach for them. Soon enough he became embroiled in the religious debate or *shastrārthas*. But the other preacher the Sanātānis brought out around the same time (1930), namely Pt Ramchandra Sharma, was a more sensible character. He attempted to be fair and on equal terms with both the quarrelling groups. Like Shri Krishna Sharma, he wanted to see the Hindus unified in the struggle towards the freedom of Indians. He gave due credit to the enormous work the Ārya Samāj had done in Fiji<sup>68</sup> in the various areas they had rightly concerned themselves. He attempted to ameliorate the two factions. He spent much time travelling through rural areas chanting and singing. He appeared to have kept himself out of the disputes; but doubtless his preference was towards the Sanātānis. The accounts of his time and experiences in Fiji were put together in a book (in Hindi) published by



himself, titled *Fiji Digdarshan or Fiji Peep*.<sup>69</sup> The book carries a foreword by J. R. Pearson, the then secretary for Indian Affairs in Fiji, who commends Ramchandra Sharma for mending the frictions between the sections of the Hindu community and for bringing about greater understanding of traditional tenets of the ancient faith adapted to the altered and changing circumstance as those facing the Indians in Fiji.<sup>70</sup> The author looks upon Fiji as a 'little India', and has a rather condescending attitude towards the native Fijians, much as was true of early European philanthropists who had just come across 'primitive tribes of dark people' in Africa, Latin America and in Polynesia.

### THE CATHOLICITY OF PT. VISHNU DEO

The man, however, who stuck out the fight, both for the Ārya Samāj and for the Indians at large, longer than any of those who we have discussed, was Pt. Vishnu Deo (OBE), whose career had begun in the mid 20s, after he left his teaching post in Namoli and moved to Suva to be involved in the affairs of the Hindus. He took over the editorship of both the '*Fiji Samāchār*' and the '*Vaidik Sandesh*'; these were powerful channels in the hands of the Ārya Samāj that could whip up public emotion and reaction to issues of sensitive sort. He was also involved in managing schools. He spent considerable energy in social and political issues of Indians in Fiji, and emerged consequently as an important leader of some stature in Fiji, a status he retained for the rest of his life, excepting for an unfortunate lapse in a scandal he took an upper hand in. Nevertheless, he 'owed his political position in Fiji to his reputation as a friend of the poor and an uncompromising champion of Indian, and especially Hindu, interests, as well as to his skill in debate and talent for the rough and tumble of politics.'<sup>71</sup> Though much revered in Fiji, his strategies were not met with approval by the leaders of the cause of Indians abroad, in India, including the veteran Banarsidas Chaturvedi.<sup>72</sup> As he had not been to India, much of his religious and scriptural knowledge was also acquired locally. Among Fiji Indians he was considered to be a highly learned pandit in his own right; and he undertook to impart his wisdom to a select group of Indian youth.<sup>73</sup> Like Bob Santamaria in Australian political history, Pt. Vishnu Deo's catholicity was marked, his network of propaganda channels were efficiently managed, and his eloquence in debates and proceedings commanded attention. In the same year that he organised a show of mourning by displaying a black flag in front of the Ārya Samāj headquarters, and burning an effigy of the indenture system, marking the half century of the arrival of Indians to Fiji, he was elected to the Legislative Council, swept in by the Indian support and the Ārya Samājists' timely canvassing.<sup>74</sup> By now, the influential Fiji-born leaders were from the ranks of the Ārya Samāj anyway, although Pt. Vishnu Deo did not go as far as to call for a split in the Fiji Indian National Congress, which had the blessings of Jawaharlal Nehru, to



set up a rival 'Ārya Samāj Party' which would have been tantamount to the (Australian) Democratic Labour Party split instigated by Santamaria. Vishnu Deo made common cause with his Indian opponents and called for common franchise for Indians. It was a demand taken on and championed vehemently by the Gujarati lawyer colleague of Shivabhai Patel, A. D. Patel, who was to emerge as perhaps the most significant leader of the Indians in Fiji into the two decades after Vishnu Deo's hold on the Indian community began to wane. Vishnu Deo remained an active member in the Legislative Council, where he held the floor for long hours pouring out grievances on behalf of the Indian community. He resigned over the defeat of his motion to win political rights and status for Indians on a par with other British subjects.<sup>75</sup> Approval for the resignation came from India, notably from Gandhi. Vishnu Deo published a declaration indicating the extended boycott of the Legislative Council, during the 1932 elections. He pleaded:

Remember Mahatma Gandhi's instructions to continue ceaseless agitation until equal status be granted. For the sake of your country, your nationhood, and most of all, for the preservation of your dignity let no candidate be nominated for election to the Council.<sup>76</sup>

#### SHASTRĀRTHA—THE SCENARIO FOR A CONFRONTATION

This was the scene on the political front. But something quite different and somewhat bizarre had been taking place in the religious arena. With Sanātan stalwarts like Muralilal Sastri and Ramchandra Sharma about, much controversy and tension had mounted up between the Ārya Samāj and the Sanāthan Dharma Sabhā. In India it had become commonplace to witness *shastrārtha* or religious debates between the two sects quite in the open.<sup>77</sup> Since the debate was to be public no oral and private disputations were entered into, only written exchanges were permitted, finally to be made public in an open forum. The debate went on for some nine months in Fiji, before it reached its climax in a public confrontation. Three questions from the Sanātani with responses to them from the Ārya Samāj were read out by Pt. Muralilal in a public meeting.<sup>78</sup> The written debate concerned some sensitive issues, such as Dayanand Saraswati's interpretation of *niyoga* (the widow's marriage to her brother-in-law) and the significance of certain Purāṇic folklore the Ārya protagonists had misconstrued. The audience responded with an outcry. The Sanātanis were outraged, and the Ārya Samājists jubilant at what they took to be a resounding victory for themselves. Cries of 'cowardice', 'shame on Sanātan Dharma' and '*Kya Kahena hen āp ko*.'<sup>79</sup> were hurled at the Sanātani leader. But Muralilal Sastri left town soon after, perhaps out of disgust and embarrassment over the whole episode. The Ārya Samājists had not given up and would not acquiesce in their apparent victory. With the help of Pandit Amichandra,



whose skills in Sanskrit and Hindi came handy here, the Ārya Samāj response was refurbished, with additions of details of the descriptions of the apparent carnal behaviour on the part of gods and goddesses found in some obscure Puraṇic literature. They published this with the title *Fiji men Ārya Samāj se shastrārth* (Religious Debate in Fiji with the Ārya Samāj), subtitled *Fiji me Sanātan Dharm ki bhayankar hār*.<sup>80</sup> The book was seized by police before it was released, though obviously a few copies were snatched up. A high court injunction banned the book in view of its 'obscene' contents, and the editor and publisher, Pt. Vishnu Deo and Babu Ram Singh, of the 'Fiji Samāchār' fame, were summoned to court, and reprimanded for their scurrilous misdemeanor. The Chief Justice ordered that the book be destroyed; and he also took the opportunity to sound stern warning to the two defendants on the unbefitting character of their behaviour in becoming accomplices to religious disputes which served ill the objectives they stood for in their admittedly sincere endeavours otherwise. The caustic words were meant, of course, as a blow to the significant reputation Pt. Vishnu Deo had commanded as a leader of the Indians' case in Fiji. The Chief Justice made some rather profound statements, that remain a healthy reminder to those who meddle in the 'creeds of other':<sup>81</sup>

It is my duty to warn you two men who hold office in the Arya Samaj that you are treading on dangerous grounds. Religious disputes have never throughout the history of the world assisted progress of the human race; more often they had led to rupture and bloodshed and bloodshed may lead to charges of treason.

I am going to deal leniently with you, because this is the first case of its sort in Fiji and I do not intend to send you to prison . . . Whatever your religious convictions or motives the selling of obscene literature must cease.

Sitting on this bench my only duty is to administer the law tempering justice with mercy . . . This impartial position urges me to ask the Indian community to leave religious disputes out of the purview of public debate and controversy.

I trust that it may not be too optimistic to hope that the ultimate result of this case will be a cessation of interference with the creeds of others.

The episode left an indelible impression on the Hindu community. It worried the community that their leaders were insidiously involved in keeping the sections apart. The Indians, mostly Hindus, would like to forget the episode, and feel rather embarrassed when the subject is broached. An Ārya Samāj leader, still prominent in Fiji, begged that the peace of the dead be not disturbed. He would not disclose at first that he possessed a copy of the banned treatise—though after some hesitation I was allowed a glance at the supposedly banned and destroyed copy of the *shastrārth* publication.<sup>82</sup>

### THE AFTERMATH

The upshot of the episode was that the controversy between the Ārya Samāj and the Sanātan Sabhā began to die down rapidly. The conviction



disfranchised Pt. Vishnu Deo from being nominated to the Legislative Council, although he set up a colleague, K. B. Singh for this nomination with the view to have him resign soon after entering the Legislative Council. But K. B. Singh was an opportunist, and to everyone's horror, he did not resign. Vishnu Deo was soon pardoned by the Crown and returned to the political front-line in his persistent struggle to gain common franchise for the Indians. As said earlier, other emerging leaders took up this part of the battle, and added other grievances to their list, such as the continuing exploitation by the CSR company, which had gained complete monopoly over the production and shipment of sugar in Fiji. The Kishān Sangh founded by Ayodhya Prasad, initially with the cooperation of A. D. Patel and Pt. Shivdayal Maharaj, stepped up the debate with the Sugar Company. The outcome of all this was the instigation of an extended arbitration sitting presided over by Lord Denning, some twenty or so years later. Meanwhile, the Ārya Samāj reviewed its involvement and strategies in the affairs of the Fiji-Indians and limited its objectives to the less abrasive areas of education and social work where their real *forte* lay. The '*Fiji Samāchār*' faced competition from '*Jagriti*', another Hindi paper, edited by a defiant Gujarati business from Nadi. After the death of Pt. Vishnu Deo, the '*Fiji Samāchār*' ceased publication. But the '*Jagriti*' itself faced competition from yet another Hindi weekly that survived the turbulent times, namely the '*Shanti Dut*', started by the Sanātīnis in 1935,<sup>83</sup> with the help of Pt. Gurudayal Sharma who was also the editor, and continued to be even though the paper changed hands or publishers since its inception. It was eventually bought out by the Fiji Times and Herald Company, which is part of the (Australian-based) Herald and Sun syndicate. Since the '*Shanti Dut*' has always steered a middle and almost neutral line in the affairs of the Indians in Fiji, with tendency towards the right perhaps in deference to the policy of its proprietors, its influence has been marginal in the moulding of a sense of dignity and identity amongst the Indians. The other Hindi weekly '*Jai Fiji*' is somewhat like one of the evening or Sunday papers in Australia, which caters to more popular and pedestrian interests, such as entertainment. It also recently ceased publication. Not so long ago there was talk of establishing another paper, to replace the defunct '*Fiji Samāchār*' and '*Jagriti*'. This move came from a Sanātāni of some renown in present day Fiji, namely Pt. Vivekanand Sharma, formerly a member of the Fijian Parliament, and sometime publisher. But his attempts were not very fruitful. The '*Prashānt Samāchār*' saw a few issues in print and then folded up, as though the momentum of its creator had been lost.<sup>84</sup> One could say, nevertheless, that the torch borne by the first Ārya Samājists to come to Fiji has been kept glowing. But whether the light it emits is bright enough to engulf the whole of the Hindu, let alone the Indian, population in Fiji, is indeed an open question: the indications are that it spreads thinly but significantly in parts.<sup>85a</sup> And it is in these parts that its achievements have been quite outstanding.



### LAST IMPRESSIONS

Andrews had seen the signs of this during his final visit to Fiji: 'By far the greater part of the Indian community is Hindu. The higher moral standard now reached has been due in a very great measure to the reforming efforts made by the Arya Samaj (*sic*) and also to the return of the religious sanctions of Hinduism through the Sanatan Dharma Sabha.'<sup>85</sup> Indeed, the two sections of the Hindu community engaged in a sort of dialectical interaction that overall produced gainful results for their people at large. 'But', as Gillion argues, 'even after making allowance for the benefits, it was unfortunate that the Indian community could not stand together, that it was not better led, and that it had so much bad advice from narrow-minded though admittedly well-meaning people. Sectarian conflict weakened the Indians' claim to respect, enabled wedges to be driven between them by self-interested parties, and threw up the wrong type of leaders, who used sectional conflict to promote their own interests.'<sup>86</sup>

To be more fair, however, to the Indians and particularly to the Ārya Samāj, one has to reckon with the peculiar predicament facing the people there. The difficulties that have plagued the Indians from the moment they were freed from their 'slavish' recruitment have to be appraised in the context of this perspective—which Andrews articulates clearly for us:

The problem has now to be faced in all the colonies where Indians have settled down, after indenture has been ended, whether it is best for them to remain bound up politically as well as spiritually with their mother country India, or whether they should 'cut the painter' and start out on their voyage alone. Should they look at all times to India for support? Or should they launch out boldly into the politics of the new country where their children were born, calling that their motherland and thinking in those new terms, remembering India only as a distant dream? I have been present and watched this great issue being faced by Indians who have settled abroad, in Natal, Trinidad, British Guiana, Fiji, and other countries. Gradually I have learnt my lesson from them. There is no 'cut and dried' formula which may be applied at all times, in every situation. For almost everything depends on the stage that has been reached. Some colonies are backward; some are forward. What may be best at one stage, may be less suitable at another. The problem is essentially one of adjustment.'<sup>87</sup>

'Adjustment', indeed, as any Indian would be quick to remind a foreigner visiting India; Indians have learned to live with this rule, and this in part accounts perhaps for their high level of achievement wherever they go, outside India. Andrews, after prattling on like any modern-day tourist to Fiji about the 'genial air of friendliness'—which may only be skin-deep—makes a more positive statement, which is noteworthy, and fitting to end this discussion with:

'There is one still deeper thought that has been on my mind all the time while



I have been writing. The Indian settlers in Fiji have shown to the world that the Hindu faith is a living religion with remarkable powers of recovery. They have also shown that its moral principles, which they have retained and renewed—the sanctity of marriage, the family life, the courtesy due to other races, the love of animals and nature—that all these are singularly akin to Christian culture at its best and to the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>188</sup>

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper is a product of some curiosities that began in early 1980, when I came across some documents bequested by the late Mr C. P. Sharma, one-time statesman and member of Parliament in Fiji. (See also n45). Several references to the Ārya Samāj and Sanātan Dharma Sabhā led me to investigate an aspect of the history of Fiji Indians in some detail. The project took me to Fiji where I met a number of people who assisted me in one way or another. Thus I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation and gratitude to the following individuals, in particular: Swami Bhaskaran Arañya (formerly Shri Bhaskaran Iyer) a revered teacher who came from India, taught and contributed to the religious life of Indians in Fiji; under whom the present writer once studied also. Sri Prahlad Ārya, Principal of Swami Shraddhanand Memorial School, whom I met and interviewed in Sydney a few years ago; Sri Sant Ram (*ex officio* (Ra region) Ārya Samāj); Sri R. Parmeshwar (MBE, JP, ex-President and Veteran of the Ārya Samāj Pratinidhi Sabhā of Fiji), Mr Sashi Lakhan (son of Dr Lakhan, another veteran Ārya), Pt. Gurdayal Sharma (editor of *Shanti Dut*), Mr K. P. Sharma, Sri Kantilal Champaneri (author of *Āshā* in Hindi, Suva, 1981); and not least, Dr Richard Barz (Australian National University, Canberra) for his encouragement with and interest in the work, and Dr Robert Norton (Macquarie University, Sydney) for his valuable comments and suggestions.

### NOTES

- 1 Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon initiated the negotiations and succeeded by 1879 to introduce the Indian Indentured system. W. P. Morel, *Britain in the Pacific Islands*, London: Oxford University Press, 1960. Also see, K. L. Gillion, *Fiji's Indian Migrants*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, (published in association with The Australian National University) 1962. p3ff. (Henceforth: Gillion I). The name of the boat was *Leonidas*, it brought 450 Indians initially (1879).
- 2 J. T. F. Jordens, 'Sectarianism: The case of the Ārya Samāj', (A paper prepared for the Asian Studies Association of Australia, IV National Conference, Monash University, 1981. See also, Santosh N. Deśai 'Paramātman in the Sanskrit and Hindi writings of Swami Dayanand Saraswati', (A paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, San Francisco, California, Dec. 19-22 1981) p. 1 (personal attendance).



- 3 A Panjabi youth, Beharilal, on his way to Argentina via Australia in 1904, stopped over to stay in Fiji; he had with him a copy of the *Satyārtha Prakāsh* in Urdu, from which he gave readings to a regular group at Mangal Singh's house in Samabula, Suva. The Ārya Samāj arose out of this.  
*Satyārtha Prakāsh* was written in Hindi, and issued in two editions in Dayanand's own time. Reference to its reverence as an 'infallible', '*summa theologica*', is in Jordens *op. cit.* p.6.  
 The early Indian settlers though, were more preoccupied with chanting, devotional singing and narrating mythologies. Some Sanskrit texts also were brought Ārya (*Hindu*) *Sanskriti Fiji Dwip Men*, Kashi Ram Kumud, Tavua. 1970 (Hindi) p. 19.
- 4 Santosh Desai, *op. cit.*, p.6
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- 6 K. L. Gillion *The Fiji Indians, A Challenge to European Dominance, 1920-1946*, Canberra: The Australian National University Press, 1977, p. 102 (Henceforth, Gillion II). See also Chandra Jayawardena 'Migration and social change: A survey of Indian communities overseas', *Geographical Review* 58, 1968, pp. 426-49.
- 7 In Totaram Sanadhya: *Fiji Men Mere Ikkīs Varsh*, Varanasi: Banarsidas Chaturvedi, 1973, reprint of letter from Miss Dudley, p. 39-40. Also in Vijay Naidu, *The Violence of Indenture in Fiji*, Fiji Monograph Series No 3; Suva: World University Service and University of South Pacific 1980. Chp. I fn. 12, p. 82. Gives a lucid account of the conditions of Indians under the indenture system. See also: Adrian C. Mayer, *Indians in Fiji*. London: Oxford University Press, 1963, and Gillion I p. 157. Women in Australia took up the cause of the suffering of women under the indenture system in Fiji.
- 8 C. F. Andrews and W. W. Pearson, *Indentured Labour in Fiji and Independent Inquiry*, Calcutta 1916, p.8—quoted in Naidu, *op. cit.* fn.3 p. 87
- 9 Gurdayal Sharma gives the date as 25 December 1904, in his commemorative article on the Ārya Samāj in a special issue of the '*Shanti Dut*' (Hindi Weekly) Suva; June 25, 1981. p. 12 But Gillion (I p. 147) gives the date as 1902, which conflicts with the date given above and by Shri Prahalad Arya for whom it is family history. Also, Shiudutt Sharma had not arrived until 1904. '*Shanti Dut*' *ibid.* p. 11.
- 10 Gillion I p.147.
- 11 *Ibid.* Gillion tells that the Kabir *panthi* had a considerable following in the early days.
- 12 Vijay Naidu *op. cit.*, p.77.
- 13 Gillion II, p. 102
- 14 Gillion I, p. 153.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 152 and Ram Chandra Sharma *Fiji Digdarshan or Fiji Peep*, Manadawar (Bijnor), U.P: Shree Rama Chandra Pustkalaya, 1937, p. 110.
- 16 Ramachandra Sharma, *ibid.*, p. 110.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 82 confirmed by Shri R. Parmeshwar in personal discussion; in Totaram Sanadhya. p. 34.
- 18 J. T. F. Jordens *Swami Shraddhananda, His Life and Causes*, Delhi: O.U.P. 1981.
- 19 Shri Prahalad Arya, in conversation. Cf. Andrews advised Swami Shraddhananda to be particularly careful in the leaders he chose for overseas chapters of the Ārya Samāj. C. F. Andrews *India and the Pacific*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1937, p. 157.
- 19a A whole issue of '*Shanti Dut*', was devoted to the centenary of the Ārya Samāj presence in Fiji, June 25, 1981. By courtesy of the editor.



- 20 R. Parmeshwar, personal interview.
- 20a In Gillion I p. 172. In an Indian journal, *Bharat Mitra*, catering to problems of Indians overseas, the Swami wrote under non-dé-plume of the plight of Indian women in Fiji.
- 21 Ramchandra Sharma *op. cit.*, p. 111, and *Shanti Dut*, *op. cit.* p. 12
- 22 Totaram Sanadhya, *Fiji Dwip Men Mere Ikkis Varsh (My Twenty One Years in Fiji Islands)* 2nd ed. from Kanpur, 1919 (in Hindi); A more recent edition has been issued by Banarsidas Chaturvedi, Varanasi, 1973; and it carries a foreword by Mahatma Gandhi, where it is narrated that Totaram was a discovery of C. F. Andrews ('Deen Bhandu'), and brought to Gandhi's ashram in Sabramati by Banarsidas Chaturvedi, whose concern for Fiji Indians is well known.
- 22a Totaram's Australian experience is narrated on p. 72 *ibid.*
- 23 K. Hazareesingh: *History of Indians in Mauritius* London: Macmillan Education, 1975 (revised edition 1977) p. 77-85. Gillion II p. 21
- 24 *Ibid.* p. 77.
- 25 Hazareesingh, *passim*, and Gillion II p. 2. See also Totaram Sanadhya *op. cit.*, p. 22 ff.
- 26 A tribute paid by Dr Ramgoolam, in notes 2, *ibid.* p. 85
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 88. But undoubtedly, orthodox Hindus reacted strongly against the Ārya; thus two rival societies emerged—the Brahman Sabhā and Kshatriya Sabhā (p. 89).
- 28 Hazareesingh p. 85. Gandhi later gave approval and informed via telegram of Manilal's journey *via* Australia. Totaram, p. 24 Some sketches of his life in Ramchandra Sharma, p. 945.
- 29 Gillion *ibid.* p. 21 Hazareesingh, p. 85.
- 30 Gillion II *ibid.* p. 21 p. 31 (by name Madame Carrière).
- 30a Ramchandra Sharma *op. cit.*, Totaram Sanadhya p. 25 Gillion, *ibid.*
- 31 Gillion, p. 157 Gillion II p. 22.
- 32 Hazareesingh *op. cit.*, p. 88.
- 33 Gillion II *in passim*.
- 33a *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- 34 Ramchandra Sharma *op. cit.* p. 94 Gillion II p. 32.
- 35 *Ibid.* p. 22.
- 36 in Gillion, II p. 50.
- 37 *Ibid.* p. 106.
- 37a in Gillion *ibid.* p. 43.
- 38 *Ibid.* p. 40-45.
- 39 *India and the Pacific* Andrews, *op. cit.* p. 157. See note 19 above.
- 40 For Tagore's message to the Indians in Mauritius, see Hazareesingh, *op. cit.*, p. 103.
- 41 Totaram Sanadhya relates incidents of a European solicitor who charged an enormous sum of money to some Indian workers, with false promises of a service never rendered, *op. cit.*, p. 20. The promise was to have organised passage to the Republic of Argentine!
- 42 Ramchandra Sharma *op. cit.*, p. 95-96.
- 43 Gillion II p. 53 *Sanskriti Fiji Dwip Men*, *op. cit.*, p. 21-2.
- 44 Gillion *ibid.*, p. 54-57, fn 20 for the Australian report..
- 45 Profile in Ramchandra Sharma p. 134-135 and family archive. His son, also called Totaram, later Chandra Pratap Sharma ("C.P."), took up the father's cause, educated himself abroad and gained training in Brisbane, Vancouver,



- and Oxford. He returned to assist the Trade Union movement in Fiji, help set up Fiji's first independent Banking Corporation and entered Parliament as an eminent statesman. In late 1970s he moved to retire in Melbourne with his family; he breathed his last in 1978. I am grateful to Dr. Renuka Sharma (beloved daughter of C.P.) for access to the family archive.
- 46 Ramchandra Sharma *op. cit.*, p. 96. 66
- 47 *Ibid.*, (quoted) p. 100. 67
- 48 *Ibid.*, and Gillion II p. 54–5. 68
- 49 Personal observation in rural area of Ba. 69
- 50 Gillion II p. 104. 70
- 51 *Ibid.*, p. 104.
- 52 Andrews, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
- 53 Andrews, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
- 53a Gillion II, p. 113. There were also other youth groups, such as the Young Men's Indian Association, Indian Christian Society, and of course, the Y.M.C.A. (to which, however, even Indian Christians were not admitted for a while). On Indian nationalists involvement on the part of Fiji Indian Youth, see *Shanti Dut* *op. cit.*, p. 11. 71
- 54 Gillion II, p. 121. 72
- 55 *Ibid.*, p. 127. 73
- 56 '*Shanti Dut*', *op. cit.*, p. 11 Gillion II p. 108, 135.
- 57 Ramchandra Sharma, p. 113.
- 58 Who was a Christian, Gillion II p. 109. 74
- 59 *Ibid.*, p. 133. 75
- 59a '*Shanti Dut*' *op. cit.*, p. 14 Gillion (II p. 121) mentions some of the institutes in India the Ārya Saṁaj pupils were enrolled at. (Mr Pathik's son, for example, was one of the fortunate candidates, he is, or was until recently, the head of the Fiji School of Medicine.) 76
- 60 '*Shanti Dut*' says 5 *op. cit.*, p. 12. Gillion gives the figure of 3, with Ārya Saṁaj influence in at least 8 others *op. cit.*, 119–120. Some details also in Ramchandra Sharma, *op. cit.*, pp. 82–88. The three were: Gurukul Saweni, Lantoka (1918), Vunimono Ārya School (1930); Ārya Saṁaj Girls' School, Samabula (1930). Now there are over a dozen. 77
- 61 Andrews *op. cit.*, p. 43. 78
- 62 *loc. cit.* 79
- 63 *loc. cit.* 80
- 64 See '*Shanti Dut*' *op. cit.*, for reference to Pt. Amichandra's commendable work. The texts were called, eg. *Hindi Ki Pahli Pothi* (which went up to *pañcavi* or fifth book, and continued to further readers, called '*Bal Vinod Pahla* and *Dustara bhag*'). The series was published by the Indian Printing and Publishing Co of Suva, and distributed by the Fiji Samachar Press (obviously an Ārya Saṁaj involvement). The fifth reader carried a foreword by the then (1944) Director of Education, who begins by deploring the evils of World War II, and comments: 'Pandit Ami Chandra V. A. is to be congratulated on his initiative in producing this excellent series of Hindi Readers. The topics have been selected so that the interest of the pupils will be captured and held. The simplicity of language, the grading of vocabulary, the idomatic touches and the fulency [*sic*] of style are most commendable' (Cover page, fifth reader, reprint 1958). 81
- 65 Gillion II, p. 139. 82
- 83 84
- 85 86
- 85a 87



- 66 *Ibid.*, p. 140.
- 67 A number of whom are mentioned in the *Ārya (Hindu) Sanskriti Fiji Dwip Men* (*op. cit.*).
- 68 In his *Fiji Digdarshan or Fiji Peep op. cit.*, p. 110–113.
- 69 The cover title is misspelt 'Fiji Peep' (which could confuse an uninitiate in Fiji Indian history). See note 15 above. He mentions having taken his preaching to prison in Suva as well for five years.
- 70 Foreward *ibid.* Acknowledging the volatile controversies between the Ārya Samāj and the Sañatan Dharma, Pearson comments:  
 'I should say at once however, in spite of the bitterness aroused and at times of considerable provocation, Pt. Ram Chandra's influence tended strongly on the side of peace and at the same time towards friendly tolerance of the followers of other religions. This was more important as with religious feelings aroused the controversies threatened at times to involve both Muslims and Christins (*sic*)' p. 8.
- 71 Gillion II p. 107. Though activists in India were not all that sympathetic, and Banarsidas Chaturvedi even criticised him (*ibid.*).
- 72 *Ibid.*, p. 108–114.
- 73 He is said to have gained his Sanskrit learning from the writings of Swami Prahbu Dutt Brahmachari *Visva Darshan*, Misrilal Jayaswal (International Cyclist-missionary) A Fiji Samachar publication, 1963. (inside cover), and personal sources.
- 74 Gillion II, p. 132–2.
- 75 *Ibid.*, p. 137 and R. Parmeshwar (interview notes).
- 76 *Ibid.*, p. 145 *ibid.*
- 77 These debates were already rampant in India, which reached the courts. (See Jordens, *Shraddhananda* . . . , *op. cit.*, p. 53). In Mauritius, likewise, some dispute over genealogy had led the matter to be resolved in the Supreme Court; apparently, the sacred institution of 'caste' was on trial this time. cf. Hazareesingh, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
- 78 Ramchandra Sharma, p. 133.
- 79 R. Parmeshwar, interview notes. ('What have you to say now?').
- 80 Personal sighting of the supposedly 'banned' and destroyed 'seditious' publication, with an Ārya Samāj strongman in Fiji, who claimed it was merely the proofreader's copy. See also Gillion II, p. 109, p. 114; and Ramchandra Sharma.
- 81 'The Fiji Times & Herald', 9 March 1932. The Fiji Times & Herald Archives, Suva, with due thanks to the 'Fiji Times' and its editor Mr V. Singh.
- 82 See note 80 above.
- 83 Gurdayal Sharma has been its veritable editor since its inception. Ramchandra Sharma, facing p. 88 (taken in 1935). P.S. Since June 1982 the editorship has been with Shri M. C. Vinod Sharma.
- 84 The funding, apparently, was provided by an Indian entrepreneur from Hong Kong, which on last report had been diverted to some other lucrative venture.
- 85 For example, essays on Ārya Samāj by students could be found in school magazines defending the approaches of the Ārya Samāj. One such appeared in *The Labasan 1981*, the annual magazine of Labasa College (in Vanualevu, Labasa), 1981, pp. 84–88. (Copy with courtesy of Editor, Mr. Amrit Lodhiya.)
- 85a Andrews *op. cit.*, p. 37.
- 86 Gillion II, p. 113.
- 87 'Race Relations in Fiji' C. F. Andrews *Representative Writings*. Compiled and edited by Marjorie Sykes, New Delhi National Book Trust, 1973, p. 210–211.



- 88 *Ibid.*, p. 211. cf.—Chandra Jayawardena 'Religious belief and social change—the development of Hinduism in British Guiana' *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol 8, 1966, pp. 211–40.

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## ASHOKAN MISSIONARY EXPANSION OF BUDDHISM AMONG THE GREEKS (IN N.W. INDIA, BACTRIA AND THE LEVANT)

David A. Scott

The reign of the third Mauryan emperor Ashoka (272-323 BC) transformed Buddhism. Although it had been expanding slowly since its foundation in the sixth century, Buddhism was still rooted in the *Purathima* (Eastern Tract) of the middle-lower Ganges from which it had arisen. By the end of Ashoka's reign the Buddhist dharma had been heard in all corners of the Indian subcontinent, and, indeed, was starting to make its way even further afield. The very fact that most of the subcontinent had been welded into political unity under the Mauryan dynasty, founded by the Chandragupta (c. 321-298), no doubt facilitated such a rapid Buddhist expansion. Over and above this was the direct sympathy and support given by Ashoka, who after his particularly bloody campaign against the kingdom of Kalinga (Orissa) seems to have had a severe crisis of conscience that led him towards Buddhism. Thus it was that he came to refer to himself as a lay Buddhist (*upāsaka*) at the rock inscriptions of Sahasram and Brahmagiri; while announcing his own reverence and faith in the 'Buddha, Dharma and Sangha' at the rock inscription of Calcutta-Bairat.<sup>1</sup> Under his aegis Buddhism thus spread throughout the Indian world.

In doing so, Buddhism came up against Hellenism. As a result of the meteoric career of Alexander the Great, Greek (including Macedonian) political power had been established across many lands, from the waters of the Aegean and the Nile to those of the Jaxartes and Indus. Following his premature death in 323 BC the Hellenic mantle in the east had been picked up by Seleucus, who from his capital Antioch held writ over Mesopotamia, the Iranian plateau, and the distant provinces of Sogdia and Bactria. However Alexander's conquests, and the Greek communities that he had left, in the Indus valley (hereafter referred to as NW India) were not to fall into Seleucid hands. Seleucus himself c. 304 BC had in the course of his eastern campaigns encountered Chandragupta in NW India, but instead of



coming to blows these two empire builders came to a division of spheres of influence. On the one hand Seleucus ceded all his claims in India (including Arachosia/Kandahar) to Chandragupta, while on the other hand Chandragupta gave Seleucus some 500 fighting war-elephants. The hand of a Seleucid princess sealed the bargain (Strabo *Geography* 15.2.9). Cordial Mauryan-Seleucid relations were thereupon maintained under Chandragupta and his successor Bindusara (298–273 BC), as exemplified in the personal correspondence between the courts; and in the continuing exchange of ambassadors, of whom the Seleucid envoy to Chandragupta, Megasthenes (the author of the now lost work *Indika*) was but one.<sup>2</sup> Consequently when Ashoka ascended to the throne, the Greeks had become quite familiar in Mauryan circles, and were dubbed *Yona* (Sanskrit *Yavana*, Achaemenid Old Persian *launa*, as derived from the Hellenic area of Ionia).<sup>3</sup>

The Ashokan period was then for Buddhism an axial moment, since not only was it changing from a regional Indian tradition to a pan-Indian one; but as a result of its encounter with Hellenism, which will be shown in this study, it thereby started to break away from its geographical-cultural Indian cocoon. In short Buddhism started to reveal its cross-cultural and universalistic religious potential. What we propose to do in this work is to trace this bringing of Buddhism to the Greeks, both within the Mauryan Empire and outside it in Seleucid Bactria and even the Levant. The driving forces behind this expansion were two-fold, namely Ashoka himself, and also Buddhist leaders of his time.

Ashoka's own involvement in this is not too surprising. As a pious *upsaka* he could very easily have thought that actively fostering the moralistic-societal aspects of the Buddhist dharma (Brahmi *dhamma*, Kharoshthi *dhrama*) would foster peace within his realm. Following such a logic Ashoka appointed various *dhamma mahamatras*, roughly translatable as dharma-commissioners, who as their name suggests concerned themselves with the spreading of the dharma. In particular they were very much concerned with charitable and welfare works which was the application at the societal level of the Buddhist precepts of mortality (*sila*). Our sources for their work come from the various edicts that Ashoka caused to be inscribed throughout the empire in Brahmi and Kharoshthi (the latter being at Shahbazgarhi and Mansera near Peshawar in the upper Indus). The Rock Edict V from Shahbazgarhi described the work of these dharma commissioners:

In times past *mahamatras* of dharma did not exist. But *mahamatras* of dharma were appointed by me when I had been annointed thirteen years. These are occupied with all sects in establishing dharma, in promoting dharma, and for the welfare and happiness of those who are devoted to dharma among the Yonas, Kambojas and Gandharas, among the Rathikas, among the Pitinikas and whatever other western borderers (*aparamta*) of mine there are.<sup>4</sup>



It is noticeable that all of these groups mentioned in Rock Edict V come from the north-western zone of India.

Of all these border communities within the Mauryan empire, it was the Greeks in the north-west who were the most alien, and who therefore posed the greatest challenge of all to Buddhism. In bringing the dharma to these Greek communities Buddhism was reaching out to a group that did not share the Indian customs and world view with which Buddhism had previously had to deal with. As the Rock Edict XIII at Kalsi noticed:

There is no country where these two classes, the Brahmins (*bahmane*) and Shramanas (*shamane*) do not exist, except among the Yonas.<sup>5</sup>

It was precisely because the Greeks were so un-Indian that the coming of Buddhism to them represented such an important development in the breaking away of Buddhism from its previous Indian restrictions. Of course it may be suggested that Ashoka's claims to have brought the dharma to his Greek subjects was idle boasting. However this has been archaeologically confirmed at Kandahar where two shortened Ashokan edicts were found, one a Graeco-Aramaic bi-lingual in 1958, and a purely Greek one in 1963.<sup>6</sup>

Ashoka's activities were not just restricted to the Greeks situated within the Mauryan boundaries. In addition his eyes also turned to the larger Hellenic world that lay beyond his western frontiers, and with which (especially in regard to the Seleucids) the Mauryans were not unfamiliar. Consequently we hear of Ashoka sending envoys to announce the dharma, a process called by him as a conquest by dharma (*dharma-vijaye*). In such a vein the Rock Edict XIII announced how:

The conquest by dharma (*dharma-vijaye*), this has been won repeatedly by Ashoka both here and among all borderers, even as far as six hundred yojanas where the Yona-king Antiyoga rules, and beyond this Antiyoga, (to) four kings named Tulamaya, named Antikini, named Maka, named Alikyashudala; likewise towards the south the Chodas and Pandyas, as far as Tamraparni. Likewise here in the king's territory, among the Yonas . . . everywhere (people) are conforming to Ashoka's instruction in dharma. Even those to whom the envoys of Ashoka do not go . . .<sup>7</sup>

Looking more closely at the Edict, different groups of Greeks are in fact being talked about, namely (a) those within the Mauryan boundaries, (b) those at the Hellenic courts in the Levant, and (c) the immediately adjacent Hellenic areas under Seleucid control like Bactria.

Ashoka's attempts to inculcate the dharma amongst the Greek communities of N.W. India has already been mentioned in regard to Rock Edict V and the local Greek edicts found at Kandahar. The claims about repeated successes being won at the Hellenic courts of the Levant probably have a



large measure of pious exaggeration about them. The Edict was however very accurate in its enumeration of Hellenic rulers who during 260–258 BC were indeed the Seleucid ruler Antiochus II, Ptolemy of Egypt, Antigonus of Macedonia, Magas of Cyrene, and Alexander of Epirus. Moreover something of the cordial Seleucid-Mauryan relations has already been discussed. Ptolemaic Egypt had also enjoyed diplomatic contacts with the Mauryans, as was exemplified in the sending by Ptolemy II (283–246) of one Dionysius as his envoy to the Mauryan court, of Bindusara or even perhaps Ashoka himself (Pliny, *Natural History* 6.58). The sending of envoys by Ashoka to announce the dharma to the Seleucid and Ptolemaic courts was quite feasible, and by just a small geographic extension to the other Hellenic kingdoms. The thought of such envoys treading the streets of Antioch and Alexandria (not to mention Athens and Jerusalem) is an intriguing one; with some proposals being made by some writers for possible Buddhist influences on the Gnostic and Essene movements and general ascetic currents. Unfortunately Greek sources are silent concerning their arrival in the Mediterranean world, and so such speculation as to possible Buddhist influences remains at that level of speculation only.

Amidst such foreign missions it should not be forgotten that Rock Edict XIII talked about the dharma being taken by envoys to the lands which were outside the (western) frontiers of the Mauryan Empire, but which were not as far as the Seleucid royal centre of Antioch and Babylon. This suggests the closer Seleucid lands that were immediately adjacent to the Mauryan boundary, in other words most probably the pre-eminent Seleucid province of Bactria which lay on the other side of the Hindu Kush passes from NW India. The separate Rock Edict at Jaugada (no. 2) talked generally about these immediately adjacent areas:

It might occur to unconquered borderers (*amtanam*) to ask 'What does the king desire with us?' This alone is my wish, that they may have confidence in me; that they may obtain only happiness from me, not misery; that they may learn this, that the king will forgive them what can be forgiven; that they may be induced by me to practice dharma, that they may attain happiness both in this world and in the other world.<sup>8</sup>

Certainly it would have been very strange if Ashoka's envoys had gone into NW India and farther afield to the Seleucid centres in Syria and Mesopotamia, without going into the more accessible province of Seleucid Bactria. After all Bactria and NW India had been connected by well established trade routes since the Bronze Age, and the former had been an important Achaemenid satrapy, the scene of Alexander's romantic encounter with Roxane. Under Hellenic political control Bactria had attracted significant Greek settlements, of which the recently excavated city of Ai



Khanoum (complete with a theatre, library and gymnasium) was a fine example of Greek urban civilization and power.

It is, though, a fair point to ask how much impact one could really expect individual envoys sent by Ashoka to have had in such areas that lay outside the Mauryan Empire. To use imagery more familiar in the context of the American prairies, these dharma-envoys may have fulfilled a role more of Buddhist missions of reconnaissance, rather than of settlement.

At this point in time these 'preliminary' efforts made by Ashoka were supplemented by direct initiatives taken by leaders of the Buddhist community in India, to spread the dharma in a more long-lasting way among such extraneous groups like the Greeks. The signal for such initiatives were given at the (Third) Buddhist Council, that met c. 250 BC, 'under the protection of king Asoka' (*Mahavamsa* 5.280). One of the major aims of the Council was to compile an authoritative corpus of Buddhist texts that would resolve particular disputes over doctrine (dharma) and monastic rules of discipline (*vinaya*). This brings to mind similar concerns that manifested themselves at the Council of Nicaea that met in 325 AC, under the auspices of the first Christian Roman emperor Constantine.

If we return to the (Third) Buddhist Council we find that Pali sources paint a very interesting picture of its activities. Particularly interesting are the decisions taken there which are described in the twelfth chapter of the *Mahavamsa* 'the converting of different countries'. There we read of the deliberations of the Council president, the *thera* (elder) Moggaliputta Tissa who:

looking into the future, he had beheld the founding of the dharma in adjacent countries.

Filled with this foreknowledge:

The *thera* Majjhantika he sent to Kasmira and Gandhara, the *thera* Mahadeva he sent to Mahisamandala. To Vanavasa he sent the *thera* named Rakkhita, and to Aparantaka (*lit.* 'Western Ends'), the Yona named Dhammarakkhita, but the *thera* Maharakkhita he sent into the country of the Yona.<sup>9</sup>

Where was the country of the Yona (Greeks)? It would not seem to refer to the Greek communities in NW India for Majjhantika had been sent to Gandhara, and Dhammarakkhita had been sent to the Western Ends (Aparantaka, Sanskrit Apraranta), which were taken to include N Gujarat, Kathiawar, Karachi and Sind. Although there is a danger of reading too much into innocuous phrasing the reference to the Greek area as 'but . . . the country of the Yona' seems to imply an area with a different geographical/political status from those other areas on the fringe, but still within, the Mauryan boundaries in NW India which did not have the title of country put



before them. The distant Greek centres of Seleucid Mesopotamia do not seem to be implied either, for in the *Mahavamsa* text all the areas mentioned (Kashmir, Gandhara, 'Western Ends', Himalayas, Bengal and Ceylon) were either on the fringe of, or immediately adjacent to, the Mauryan Empire. Interestingly enough it was at this moment in time that Diodotus, the Seleucid governor of Bactria was breaking away from that Seleucid control and founding a Greek kingdom of Bactria.<sup>10</sup> Consequently it may well be argued that the 'adjacent . . . land of the Yonas' was in fact the newly establishing Graeco-Bactrian realm.

Some might say though that such Pali sources, composed in far away Ceylon, cannot hope to have any reliability for events along the northern fringes of the Indian sub-continent. However archaeological excavations have confirmed some of the Pali statements. For example an urn, dated to the third century BC has been found at Bhilsa Tope in Kashmir with a dedicatory inscription to 'Sururisa Majjhima, the teacher of all the Himalaya region' which is none other than the Majjhima so named in the *Mahavamsa* and *Dipavamsa* 8.10-11.<sup>11</sup>

Although the geographical basis of these Pali accounts would indeed seem to have historical foundation, caution needs to be exerted due to later pious embellishments over the popular impact of such missions. What should one make of the Pali claim in the *Mahavamsa* that:

The wise Maharakkhita, who went to the country of the Yona delivered in the midst of the people the Kalakarama Suttanta. A hundred and seventy thousand living beings attained to the reward of the path, ten thousand received the pabbajja.<sup>12</sup>

Similar successes were recorded for Majjhantika in Kashmir-Gandhara and for Dhammarakkhita in the 'Western Ends'. Although the numerical success would indeed seem to be somewhat poetical license, it would seem important that there is no mention of success among ruling Greek court circles, in contrast to the *Mahavamsa*'s claim of such royal favour being found by Sona and Uttara in Suvannabhumi (Bengal). This measure of restraint in describing the mission impact of Maharakkhita gives his presence in the 'land of the Yonas' more credibility. If we can read between the lines, and this is only a tentative extrapolation, Maharakkhita's mission to the Greeks in Bactria may have had some effect among some ordinary Greeks (and local E. Iranian Bactrians), but not among the high political circles around Diodotus. This is not too surprising though. Their political disengagement from the Seleucid Empire, and the advance of the Parthian nomads into Iran were the pressing concerns for the Diodoti family, who were keen to proclaim themselves as Hellenes despite their political rupture with the Seleucids. Consequently the early coinage of the Diodoti (Diodotus I to



Diodotus II, c. 200 BC) continued to reflect the Olympian pantheon, with no signs of Buddhist iconography or symbolism appearing.<sup>13</sup>

Unfortunately the breaking of political links between Greek Bactria and the wider Seleucid/Mediterranean world of the Hellenic hearth, coupled with the interposition of the Parthians in Iran, had direct effects on Greek historiography which otherwise would be expected to mention such Buddhist missions among the Greeks of Bactria and NW India. Instead something of a literary blank emerged in Greek sources.<sup>14</sup> Greek writers in the West were cut off effectively from developments in the Greek communities of the East, and so have very little information at all on Bactria and NW India. Conversely such local Greek literary records as existed in Bactria, which would have noticed such a Buddhist arrival, were not able to circulate in the wider Hellenic world, and so were effectively lost to posterity in the collapse of Greek political power in Bactria and NW India c. 120–80 BC.

Nevertheless while these political considerations leave us dependent upon Buddhist material, this is not just confined to Pali literature. In fact in NW India and Bactria the Theravadins were overshadowed by the Sarvastavadin school of Buddhism. Although now extinct, with much of their historical literature lost, the Sarvastavadin material formed much of the base for the *rGya-gar-chos-'byun* (History of Buddhism in India) written by Taranatha in 1608. Because of his highly critical historical sense, and access to Sarvastavadin material, Taranatha's comments for example on Kashmir have been surprisingly reliable, despite their lateness.<sup>15</sup> His sources are also very pertinent for early Buddhist expansion during Ashoka's reign among the Greeks in NW India and Bactria (called by him Thogar, the Tibetan form of its medieval name Tukharistan, Sanskrit Tukhara). Concerning Ashoka he recorded that:

Towards the end of his life, the king took the vow to donate one hundred crores of gold to the Samghas of each of Aparantaka, Kashmir and Thogar. He donated in full to the samghas of Kashmir and Thogar.<sup>16</sup>

This directly implies that by the end of his life (232 BC) the missions initiated some twenty years earlier by Ashoka himself and by the (Third) Buddhist Council had give rise to continuing local Buddhist communities, in short the establishment of the *Sangha* in Kashmir, and the Greek-dominated areas of the 'Western Ends' and Bactria.

Given our lack of Greek literature, due to outside political vagaries of history, we are still dependent on Buddhist sources. Are there any other ones that can be placed alongside the Ashokan, Pali and Tibetan (Sarvastavadin-derived) material? Interestingly enough there are the reports left by Chinese pilgrims, who travelled to India, Sung-Yun (581–521) and above all from the detailed observer Hsuan-tsang (629–645), which mention various stupas said



to have been founded in Ashoka's time in these far north-west fringes of India. Sung-Yun noticed two such stupas in Udayana.<sup>17</sup> Hsuan-tsang mentions two stupas also in Udayanna, at Taxila three such Ashokan stupas, at Pushkalavati (Gandhara) two, in Kashmir four, and nestling in the shadow of the Hindu Kush Crest near Kabul at Nagarahara (Na-Kie-lo-ho) three Ashokan stupas.<sup>18</sup> Again a criticism may be made about the validity of such local traditions but the number of such Ashokan founded stupas given by Hsuan-tsang are noticeable for their comparative numeric modesty amidst the much greater number of non-Ashokan stupas that he records. His relative sobriety gives such mentions that he does give of Ashokan stupas in the far north-west more weight. Furthermore on his way back to China, when he crossed over the Hindu Kush crest through the Khawak pass in the direction of Qunduz (S.E. Bactria), he passed through Andarab (An-ta-lo-po) where 'there is one stupa built by Asoka-rajā'.<sup>19</sup>

For the moment this exhausts all the direct available literary sources concerning Buddhist expansion among the diverse Greek communities in the Ashokan period, although future archaeological excavations could well give further material. Enough evidence has already been found, albeit of a mainly literary type, to show that in the Ashokan period Buddhism did indeed make its way out of its previous Indian environment into the wider world, within which the Greeks were prominent. The later Mauryan decline after the death of Ashoka enabled the Greek rulers in Bactria to extend their political sway over NW India, so that contacts between Buddhism and the Greeks was furthered. One well known result of these generally cordial relationships was the 'conversion' c. 155 BC of the Greek ruler of NW India, Menander. This famous conversion was recorded in the Pali *Milindapañña* (Questions of Milinda), Chinese and Tibetan sources, and has been a popular topic in modern academic studies.<sup>20</sup> In turn Greek political power came to be broken east of the Euphrates, progressively in Iran (c. 250), Mesopotamia (129), Bactria (c. 125) and the last pockets in NW India (c. 60 BC). However, even in the later Kushan period Hellenic influences played an important role in the whole anthropocentric revolution that took place in Buddhist art in Gandhara during the 1st/2nd centuries AC. Even if we do not know of the fate that awaited the Buddhist envoys sent to the Levant, the evidence from NW India alone shows the importance of this Buddhist-Hellenic contact that was made as early as the Ashokan period. A final interesting line of enquiry would be to consider how Buddhism viewed and consequently responded to Hellenism, during these three to four centuries of effective contact. That, however, is outside the scope of this present short study, which has concentrated on pointing out the earliest decades of this contact.<sup>21</sup> What can be said is that Rudyard Kipling's famous words that 'East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet' are proved wrong by the taking of Buddhist dharma to the Greeks in the Ashokan period.

NOTES

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## NOTES

- 1 Most comprehensive and thorough treatment of the various Ashokan rock, pillar and cave inscriptions to be found in Eugene Hultzsch, *Inscriptions of Asoka* (Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum I), Oxford, 1925, pp. 171, 177-178, 173 for respective rock inscriptions quoted. The Rummindei pillar inscription recorded Ashoka's visit to the birth place of the Buddha at Lumbini, mentioning (pp. 164-165) the Buddha by name and the enlarging of a stupa, as did the Nigali Sagar pillar inscription (p. 165). At the Rapnath rock inscription there was included talk of the *saky* (i.e. Shakyamuni Buddha) and the *samgha* (pp. 167-169), while at the Ashokan rock inscription at Maski there was mention of Ashoka as a *Buddha-sakya* and of the *samgha* (p. 175). For general consideration of Ashoka as a Buddhist see pp. xliii-lv; and Trevor Ling, *The Buddha. Buddhist Civilization in India and Ceylon*, London, 1973, pp. 151-174. More recently Arthur Basham has expressed doubts about Ashoka's status as a Buddhist, 'Asoka and Buddhism — a re-examination', *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 5, 1982, pp. 131-143, but he does not seem to have taken the various explicit inscriptions referred here fully into account.
- 2 Edwyn Bevan, 'India in early Greek and Latin literature', *Cambridge History of India* I, Cambridge, 1922, pp. 391-426; George MacDonald, The Hellenic kingdoms of Syria, Bactria, and Parthia's, *ibid.*, pp. 427-433; Hartmut Scharfe, 'The Maurya dynasty and the Seleucids', *Zeitschrift fur Vergleichende Sprachforschung* 85, 1971, pp. 211-225.
- 3 Analysis of the term *Yona* given most recently by Csaba Tottossy, 'Graeco-Indo-Iranica', *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 25, 1977, pp. 129-135. and also by Awadh Narain, *The Indo-Greeks*, 1957, rep. Delhi, 1980, pp. 165-169 as App. 1.
- 4 Trans. Hultzsch, *Inscriptions of Asoka*, p. 56. The original Kharoshti forms of *dharma* has been rendered into the more familiar Sanskrit derived term of dharma. In a similar fashion the Kharoshti rendering of Kamboyas has been given the more familiar form of Kambojas, this being the term used for certain Iranian communities in the NW Indian subcontinent, see Harold Bailey, 'Ancient Kamboja', *Iran and Islam*, Edinburgh, 1971, pp. 65-71.
- 5 Trans. *ibid.*, p. 47. It should be noted that although the Edicts at Kalsi, Girnar and Maneshehra have this comment about the Greeks, the version at Shahbazgarhi omits it.
- 6 See Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli and Giovanni Garbini, *A Bilingual Graeco-Aramaic Edict by Asoka*, Rome, 1964; Daniel Schlumberger and Emile Benveniste, 'New Greek inscription of Asoka at Kandahar', *Epigraphia Indica*, 37.5, 1967, pp. 193-200. General studies by Emile Benveniste, 'Edits d'Asoka en traduction Grecque', *Journal Asiatique* JA 252:2, 1964, pp. 137-157; and also on finer linguistic points by Alain Christol, 'Les édits Grecs d'Asoka, etude linguistique', *JA* 271:1, 1983, pp. 25-42.
- 7 Text quoted from the Kalsi version in Brahmi, as trans. Hultzsch, *Inscriptions of Asoka*. All the versions of Edict XIII agree on this sending out of envoys to the Hellenic kingdoms. In the Kalsi version the Brahmi rendering of *dhamma* was used to render dharma. The actual name used for Ashoka was his royal title of Devanampriya, 'dear to the gods'. For this and his other particular title of Piyadassi, 'he who regards amiably/of gracious mien', see Romila Thapar, *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, 2nd ed., London, 1973, pp. 226-227. At a general



level she sees the dharma that Ashoka proclaimed as not being a Buddhist dharma as such. Whilst she is quite correct in pointing out the wider Indian sense of dharma over which Buddhism did not have a monopoly, she nevertheless seems to ignore the other which show Ashoka as a follower of Buddhism. The dharma which Ashoka talks about in his Rock Edicts does not contain specific identificatory Buddhist terms, but does very much reflect the social and community applications of the Buddhist dharma as fostered by the pious ruler usually called in Buddhist literature the *dharma-rajā* or *Chakravartin*, see Ling, *The Buddha*, pp. 140–147 for Buddhist attitudes to monarchical government. Despite the lack of doctrinal details in the dharma proclaimed by Ashoka in his Rock Edicts, it does become clear in such a light that this was nought but the actual practical application of the Buddhist dharma in society.

8 Trans. Hultzsck, p. 117.

9 *The Mahavamsa or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon*, trans. Wilhelm Geiger, London, 1964, p. 82. Most commentators place the redaction of this Pali text to the 5th century A.C. A similar, though shorter, version of these events is contained in *The Dipavamsa. An Ancient Buddhist Historical Record*, trans. Hermann Oldenberg, London, 1879, pp. 159–160, a Pali work that has been thought to be earlier than the Mahavamsa from between the 2nd century B.C. to the fourth century A.C.

10 Jozef Wolski, 'Le Problème de la fondation de l'état Gréco-Bactrien', *Iranica Antiqua* 17, 1982, pp. 131–146.

11 Sukumar Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India*, London, 1962, p. 115, where he also suggests that the 'land of the Yonas' was the Greek kingdom of Bactria.

12 *Mahavamsa*, p. 85. The *Dipavamsa* also recorded in its shorter form, p. 159 that 'the therā Maharakkhita who possessed the great magical powers converted the Yavana (i.e. Yona or Greek) region by preaching the Kalakarama Suttana'.

13 Marie Therese Allouche le Page, *L'Art Monétaire des Royaumes Bactriens*, Paris, 1956, pp. 164–165.

14 This literary breakdown and subsequent gap in Greek literature was commented on by amongst others Sylvain Levi, 'Le Bouddhisme et les Grecs', *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 23, 1891, pp. 36–49; and Jean Sedlar, *India and the Greek World*, Totowa (New Jersey), 1980, pp. 252–253, 262–263.

15 Jean Naudou, *Buddhists of Kasmir*, Delhi, 1980, pp. 17–20.

16 Taranatha, *History of Buddhism in India*, trans. Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya, ed. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, Calcutta, 1980, p. 65 = ch. 6, fol. 21A.

17 Sung-Yun's travels trans. Samuel Beal, *Si-yu-ki. Buddhist Records of the Western World. Chinese Accounts of India*, 1884, rep. Delhi, 1980, pp. 55–73, with Ashokan stupas in Udayana at p. 65.

18 Hsuan-tsang's travels trans. *ibid.*, pp. 74–500, with Ashokan stupas, mentioned in our main text, at pp. 170–172, 180–181, 159–160, 189, and 145–146.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 473. It would be very interesting to see if archaeological verification could be made of this Ashokan stupa in Bactria. However the only work done in that direction along the Andarab river was a cursory quick visit in 1922 by the French DAFA under Foucher. The result is that the main site there of Banu Andarab has been classified as 'an easily defensible, strategic site of an ancient town', Warwick Ball, *Archaeological Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, Paris, 1982, p. 52, entry 105. The potential is there consequently for fruitful archaeological investigations when the present political turmoil in Afghanistan ends.



- 20 Alfred Foucher, 'A propos de la conversion au Bouddhisme du roi Indo-Grec Menandre', *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* 43, 1951, pp. 259-295. For text see *Milinda's Questions*, trans. from Pali by Isaline Horner, London, 1963-1964; and Paul Demiéville, 'Les versions Chinoises du Milindapanha', *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 24, 1924, pp. 1-258.
- 21 Forthcoming article by the present author on 'East meets West. Buddhist attitudes to Hellenism (an initial enquiry)' will deal with this. Suffice to note for the moment that some Buddhist responses can be seen towards both the Olympian pantheon and the philosophical strands within Hellenism.

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# THE MUNI<sup>1</sup> AND THE MOONIES

Peter Masefield

Papists take alcohol in the house of the Lord!—so might some irate Ulsterman defame his Catholic neighbours. The statement, as it stands, is true—yet few would fail to agree that it was somewhat of a misrepresentation of the Eucharist, for though wine *is* drunk in church, it is done so on the understanding that it is symbolic of the saving blood of Christ and the whole sacramental rite is backed up by a sophisticated and elaborate theology. If one is ignorant of that theology and of the various values to which it gives rise—or if one fails to view specific rites within the general framework of their supporting theology—those rites may well appear not only absurd but even sacrilegious. When viewed from within the system as a whole such rites are, on the contrary, quite meaningful, even mandatory, for the believer; and to criticise them on the basis of some other belief system or set of values, whether religious or otherwise, would be little short of bad manners. And yet much of the criticism levelled against the new religious movements is precisely of this order, a specific activity of a particular group being singled out and then, divorced from its overall context, used as a vehicle for derisive misrepresentation.

That we tolerate this, perhaps on occasion even indulge in it, may in part be due to the fact that there is, in most of our minds, a largely unconscious and quite irrational prejudice to the effect that (a) in contrast to the established religious traditions the new religious movements parade what is simply a mishmash of bits and pieces culled, without regard to context, from already existing traditions; and that (b) like artistic and musical geniuses, religious leaders have to be dead before authenticity can be accorded to their teachings. I do not, on this occasion, propose to elaborate on the first of these two assumptions, other than to say that close—and above all honest—examination of the formative phase of almost all the major traditions of the world would probably reveal a similar process of assimilation of snippets drawn from pre-existing and contemporary faiths, the Pauline interpretation of the Christ event being a notable example, as is the way in which Mohammed fused disparate elements accumulated here and there on the caravan routes of West Asia<sup>2</sup>. As to the second, I must admit that I cannot altogether understand why, on the one hand, it is perfectly acceptable—for some even commendable—that a man should regulate his whole life on the belief that God spoke to Moses



through a burning bush, or that Jesus was raised from the dead, despite the fact that the actual existence of neither Moses nor Jesus is historically certain, yet on the other hand quite absurd that anyone should believe that that same risen Jesus could have spoken in a vision to the Reverend Moon in the middle of the twentieth century. And the only explanation seems to be that a religion, if it is to be tolerated and accorded respectability, has to possess antiquity.

Thus it may well, in the long run, transpire that the real problem that early members of the Unification Church had to face had much less to do with their beliefs and practices and much more to do with the simple fact that their founder had still been alive. And for this same reason alone such members are now obliged to suffer much the same growing pains once similarly endured by such groups as the Mormons, Quakers, Methodists and Anglicans, the latter some might unkindly have insinuated in their formative period as having owed their origins to the desire on the part of an English sovereign to dispose of a troublesome and unwanted wife. Indeed, we can push the question back still further and ask how Jesus and the Buddha—perhaps the two most respected religious teachers in the world today—were, along with their followers, regarded in their own time. Jesus, we know, did not altogether enjoy the tolerant support of his rabbinic contemporaries—indeed, they so despised him and his teachings that they had him put to death. And what of the Buddha? Did he and his early followers fare any better? It seems not, for there is preserved in the early Buddhist literature considerable evidence that they were in their day received with as little enthusiasm—and for much the same reasons—as modern religious movements such as the Moonies. According to Enroth:

The hallmarks of cultic conversation usually include the abandonment of a familiar life style; severing of ties with friends and families; a radical and sometimes sudden change in personality; the relinquishing of possessions; indoctrination with a new set of values, goals, and beliefs; the assuming of a totally new identity, including for some a new name; the acquisition of a new 'spiritual' family; unquestioned submission to leaders and group priorities; isolation from the 'outside world' with its attendant evil; subversion of the will; thought reform; the adoption of a sociocultural and spiritual insignia; and a host of other less dramatic though equally significant characteristics. As we shall see, there are even physiological dimensions to cultic involvement.<sup>3</sup>

And with this in mind, let us now delve into events that were taking place in India in the fifth century B.C.

The nomadic life in the jungle was not an easy one. With nothing but a ragged robe for protection from biting insects, cold nights and monsoon rains, and with a diet consisting of—when lucky—mere discarded scraps and leftovers, those practising such an existence were not envied by their contemporaries. Nor were they even admired:



Monks, this is the meanest of callings, this of an almsman. A term of abuse in the world is this, to say 'You scrap-gatherer! With bowl in hand you roam about' (It 89).

It was held by many that those who adopted such a lifestyle did so through fear of kings or robbers, through debt or through having lost their relatives or means of livelihood (M ii 66; It 89) and perhaps for this reason alone the Satanic figure of Māra had no difficulty in causing householders to revile, abuse, vex and annoy monks by persuading such householders that:

These shaveling recluses are menials, black, the offscourings of our kinsman's feet<sup>4</sup>. They say 'We are meditatives' . . . and with their shoulders drooping, with their faces cast down, as if *drugged*, they meditate (M i 334).

Nor does it seem that much effort was required for certain religious rivals to put it about that a female wanderer had been slain by the Buddha's disciples following numerous sexual adventures in the depths of the Jeta Grove. Pulling her body out of the ditch in which it had been buried, they paraded it about the streets of Sāvatti rousing the people's indignation saying:

Behold, brothers, the deed of the Sakyan sons! Shameless are these recluses! The Sakyan sons are wicked, evildoers, liars, no livers of the holy life (Ud 43f).

So bad, it seems, was their reputation that in some quarters it was most unwise to tread. Alms were gathered only with the greatest of difficulty in Mathurā (A iii 256), the men of Sunāparanta were deemed by the Buddha to be hot-headed, fierce and likely not only to abuse and revile his monks but also even to strike them, beat them and slay them (S iv 61f), whilst the borderlands were so perilous that none of the Buddha's followers, whether monastic or lay, would dare venture there (D iii 263f, 287; A iv 225f).

That these were no mere isolated incidents can be seen from the frequently recurring passages in which the Buddha advises his monks to endure abuse from outsiders. Of himself he says:

As an elephant, in battlefield, withstands the arrows shot from a bow, even so shall I endure abuse (Dhp 320);

whilst his followers are advised that:

If outsiders should speak against me, or against the doctrine, or against the community of monks, you should not on that account either bear malice or suffer heart-burning, or feel ill will (D i 2f).

And rather:

When outsiders speak in dispraise of me, or of the doctrine, or of the community of



monks, you should unravel what is false and point it out as wrong, saying 'For this or that reason this is not the fact, that is not so, such a thing is not found among us, is not in us' (D i 3).

How many times, I wonder, may similar sentiments have been expressed by members of more recent religious movements following the inaccurate and misleading reports of them in, say, the popular press. At any rate, the Buddha and his followers felt themselves frequently misrepresented. When Rāsiya, a village headman, informs the Buddha that he has heard that the recluse Gotama censures all ascetic ways and that he downright chides and abuses any ascetic who lives a rough life, the Buddha retorts that:

Such speak not in accordance with my view, such do misrepresent me in so saying what is wrong (S iv 330).

We shall have occasion, as the discussion proceeds, to note other commonly held beliefs considered by the Buddha to be misrepresentations of his teachings and of the practices to which these gave rise. But it will be useful at this point to turn our attention to contemporary criticisms of his teaching methods which involved charges of both brainwashing and also its corollary, that of withholding information.

That during the Buddha's own lifetime his teaching was given freely to all is an unwarranted assumption indulged in by some modern Buddhists. For the texts leave no room for doubt that his teachings admitted of both an exoteric element, concerned with the soteriological benefits stemming from alms-giving and of an esoteric element, concerned with attainment of liberation from the cycle of rebirths. Those who were exhorted and encouraged to give alms did not, except on the very rarest of occasions, go on to be acquainted with the perils and suffering associated with even heavenly rebirth. This can be seen from the reaction of Anāthapiṇḍika, a lay-supporter whose generosity had known no bounds who, on his deathbed, was informed by the Buddha's chief disciple Sāriputta that he should train himself not to grasp after objects of the world and the feelings to which such grasping gives rise. At this Anāthapiṇḍika, somewhat justifiably, retorts:

Although the Teacher and the monks who were developing their minds visited me for a long time, I have never yet heard esoteric talk such as this;

to which Sāriputta replies:

Esoteric talk such as this, householder, does not occur for householders clad in white. It is for those that have gone forth, householder, that esoteric talk such as this occurs (M iii 260f).

The esoteric was reserved for a select few, as can be seen from the Buddha's



somewhat blunt statement that he teaches the destruction of the āsavas (upon which destruction freedom from rebirth depends) *only* to those with vision (It 103). In addition, it would seem that this esoteric content was revealed gradually, as and when the Buddha deemed a person fit to receive it. Thus we find the newly converted Assaji, still in a rather dazed state, apologising that:

Now, I, friend, am new, not long gone forth, fresh to this doctrine and discipline. I am not able to teach you the doctrine in full, but I can tell you its purport briefly (Vin i 40);

whilst many instances can be found in which persons, having mastered all that they had so far been taught, then went to the Buddha requesting further instruction:

I, Lord, have attained as much as can be attained through the knowledge and wisdom of an apprentice. May the lord teach me the final doctrine (e.g. M i 494);

or, alternatively, in which the Buddha, unsolicited, gives further instruction to one whom he deems ripe to receive it, as for instance in the case of his own son Rāhula:

Mature now in Rāhula are the things that bring freedom to maturity. Suppose I were to train Rāhula finally in the destruction of the āsavas (M iii 277).

All this is in conformity with the general principle that though the Buddha teaches only whatever he knows to be fact, true and associated with the goal, he, realising this will prove disagreeable to some, is also aware of the right time for revealing such things (M i 395); and that he does so, moreover, *in such a way* that a man will know of the real that it is, and so forth (A v 36ff). Those familiar with Mahāyāna Buddhism will know that such considerations were eventually to give rise to the doctrine of upāyakauśalya in which it became acceptable—even commendable—for the Buddha, motivated through his great compassion, to trick people into attaining liberation, even if this involved deceiving them. An early instance of this can be found in the Pali sources<sup>5</sup> in which the young monk Nanda, according to tradition forcibly ordained on the day of his wedding, subsequently pines for his sweetheart and decides to revert to the lay life. The Buddha, hearing of this, intervenes and whisks Nanda off to one of the sensual heaven worlds, where Nanda is overawed at the exquisite loveliness of the celestial nymphs, compared to whom his earthly love now seems as ugly as a mutilated monkey. Untruthfully assured by the Buddha that companionship with such nymphs will be his if he remains ardent in the religious quest, Nanda forthwith applies himself to the task in hand and very quickly achieves liberation (Ud 20ff)—which must have come as somewhat of a shock to him, since in that state neither his former bride-to-be, nor the celestial nymphs, any longer held any attraction for him.



In time, of course, and to an ever increasing extent, the esoteric inevitably filtered down to the ordinary people, a fact lamented by the Buddha (M i 510). Perhaps it was for this reason that the former wives of the monk Raṭṭhapāla, as we shall see, ask him for what kind of nymphs he now lives the holy life (M ii 64). However, it is clear that when the esoteric did reach the ears of the uninitiated, they failed to understand it—and hence the many occasions upon which the Buddha protests that he is being misrepresented by others. This, together with the fact that he refused, publicly at least, to be drawn on a whole host of crucial metaphysical questions (e.g. A v 193)—including the existence or otherwise of a soul (S iv 400f)—led no doubt to the view, clearly held by many, that the Buddha was one who defines nothing as certain and a nihilist (A v 190), the latter being a charge that he vehemently—and frequently—felt obliged to deny.

That the outsider came to hear—and, at that, misunderstand—what were only snippets of an ongoing esoteric revelation, coupled perhaps with the fact that individuals such as Nanda were lured to follow the Buddha with false assurances, may well have given rise to the belief, current in the Buddha's own day, that, in modern parlance:

The recluse Gotama is a brainwasher<sup>6</sup> and he knows a brainwashing technique by means of which he lures away the followers of other sects (M i 375 = A ii 190).

Such a fear was communicated to Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, leader of the rival Jain sect, when announcing his intention of despatching his faithful convert Upāli to beat the Buddha with trickery in philosophical debate. Upāli, however, succumbs to the brainwashing technique and then returns, informing Nātaputta that he has become a follower of the Buddha, whereupon Nātaputta protests in a spluttering outburst:

You, householder, are out of your mind; you, householder, are idiotic. Saying 'I, revered sir, will refute the recluse Gotama', and having gone [to him], you have returned enmeshed in a great verbal tangle. Householder, as a man, a gelder, having gone away, might return with removed testicles, or as a man, a gouger, having gone away, might return with removed eyeballs, even so did you, householder, saying 'I, revered sir, will refute the recluse Gotama', having gone [to him], return enmeshed in a great verbal tangle. You, householder, have been brainwashed by the brainwashing technique of the recluse Gotama (M i 383).

On another occasion a Licchavi layman, by the name of Bhaddiya, is said to have confronted the Buddha with the fact that he, too, has heard it put about that he is such a brainwasher. In the events that follow, Bhaddiya is also converted. The Buddha subsequently asks him whether at any time he had actually said 'Come, Bhaddiya, be my follower; I will be your teacher', which Bhaddiya denies, the Buddha seizing this as yet a further demonstration of the way in which he is misrepresented:



Then, Bhaddiya, it seems that some recluses and brahmins are vain and empty liars and misrepresent me contrary to facts as being one who holds such a view, in saying 'The recluse Gotama is a brainwasher and he knows a brainwashing technique by means of which he lures away the followers of other sects' (A ii 193).

One might think this were ample refutation, yet Bhaddiya seemingly ignores this, as did Upālī Nātaputta's outburst, both preferring to assert that the Buddha does indeed possess a brainwashing technique, though not the sinister one they had been led to believe:

Auspicious, revered sir, is this brainwashing technique, lovely, revered sir, is this brainwashing technique. If, revered sir, my dear kith and kin . . . if all kṣatriyans . . . brahmins . . . vaiśyas . . . sūdras . . . the world with its gods, its Māras, its Brahmās, its creation with its recluses and brahmins, its gods and men, could be brainwashed by this brainwashing technique, for long would it be for their welfare and happiness (M i 383f = A ii 194).

And it is here that we have, or so it seems to me, already in the fifth century B.C., the classic dilemma that still surrounds so-called charges of 'brainwashing' in incidents of religious conversion. Outsiders maintain that its 'victims' have been caused involuntarily to abandon an existing belief system (in the case of Upālī that of the Jains) and to adopt an alternative belief system (here that of the Buddha). Both convert and critic may agree that this has come about through deliberate imposition by a skilled manipulator using sophisticated psychological techniques—yet the convert sees the event to his advantage, whereas the critic deems it to his detriment. Indeed, both parties may agree that brainwashing has occurred—but, so far as the resultant convert is concerned, such brainwashing is to be welcomed, for their brains, hitherto dominated by Maṛa's satanic influence, were indeed in need of a thorough cleansing.

To the convert the role played by the Buddha is that of a physician, the simile used being that of a man blind from birth who has been deceived into believing to be a fine clean robe that which is in truth greasy, grimy and coarse. His relations procure a skilled physician who restores his sight, whereupon he rejects both the greasy robe and the 'friend' who had deceived him. 'Even so', says the Buddha to Maḡandiya:

Were I to teach you the doctrine, saying 'This is that health, this is that nibbaṇa<sup>7</sup>', you might know health, you might see nibbaṇa. With the arising of your vision, you might get rid of that desire and attachment for the five groups of grasping, and this might even occur to you: 'For a long time indeed I have been defrauded, deceived and cheated by this mind . . . Conditioned by grasping . . . there was becoming for me, conditioned by becoming birth, conditioned by birth old age and dying, grief, sorrow, suffering, lamentation and despair came into being. Thus is the origin of this whole mass of anguish' (M i 511f).



The Buddha, the cosmic physician, washes out from the convert's brain the blinding attachment to things sensual that had, until that moment, obscured his vision of how things really are, with the result that they now come to realise the peril they had been in (M i 177) whilst under Mañā's sway.

Such cleansing is effected by a process known as the progressive talk<sup>8</sup> which commences with the exoteric teaching appropriate at the level of sensual attachment—the level at which the would-be convert still is—and proceeds, when the time is deemed ripe, to a revelation of the esoteric element:

Then the Lord talked a progressive talk, that is to say, talk on almsgiving, talk on [mundane] morality, talk on [rebirth in] heaven. He made visible the peril, the vanity, the defilement of the pleasures of the senses and the advantage in renouncing them. And when the Lord knew that the heart of Suppabuddha the leper was *ready, malleable*, devoid of the hindrances, uplifted [out of the sensual sphere], then did he make visible to him that esoteric teaching that the Buddhas have themselves discovered: suffering, its uprising, its cessation and the path;

whereupon the standard response is for the convert to proclaim:

It is wonderful, Lord! It is wonderful, Lord! It is as if, Lord, one might set upright what had been upturned, or might reveal what was hidden, or might point out the path to one who had gone astray, or might bring an oil-lamp into the darkness so that those with eyes might see material shapes (Ud 48f).

This newly acquired vision has a number of profound effects. As his brain is washed of attachment to sense-pleasures, in which he becomes henceforth immune to Mañā, he undergoes a spiritual rebirth, following which he is reckoned a son of the Buddha:

Monks, I am a brahmin, one to ask a favour of, ever clean-handed, wearing my last body, incomparable physician and surgeon. You are my own true sons, born from my mouth, born into the doctrine, created in the doctrine, heirs in the doctrine, not carnal heirs (It 101).

With this rebirth, old values, once dearly held in common with the world, are now rejected in favour of a completely new set. Former attachment to the pleasures of the senses in all their various forms is now renounced in favour of the cessation of phenomenal existence altogether:

Sights, sounds, tastes, odours, things touched and objects of the mind are, without exception, pleasing, delightful and charming—so long as one can say 'They are';

These are considered a source of happiness by the world with its gods—and when they cease this is by them considered suffering.

The cessation of phenomenal existence is seen as a source of happiness by [us] ariyans—this [insight] of those who can see is the reverse of that of the whole world:



What others say is a source of happiness, that [we] ariyans say is suffering; what others say is suffering, that [we] ariyans know as a source of happiness. Behold this doctrine, hard to understand, wherein the ignorant are bewildered (S iv 127f).

It is clear that things could not go on as they had hitherto for those who had undergone such a radical and profound change in their personality, identity and outlook. It was now incumbent upon them to take the Buddha's advice and renounce their former way of life, his converts invariably reflecting that:

'The household life is confined and dusty, going forth is in the open; it is not easy for one who lives in a house to live the holy life wholly fulfilled, wholly pure, polished like a conch-shell. Suppose now that I, having cut off hair and beard, having put on saffron robes, should go forth from home into homelessness?' After a time, getting rid of his wealth, be it small or great, getting rid of his circle of relations, be it small or great, having cut off his hair and beard, having put on saffron robes, he goes forth from home into homelessness (M i 179).

That is to say, the radical change in personality induced by the Buddha's brainwashing technique inevitably led to broken homes and the abandonment of family responsibilities. Nanda we have already seen to have been taken from his bride-to-be on his wedding-day, whilst legend has it that the Buddha himself abandoned his own wife on the same day that she had given birth to their son Rahula, in favour of a wandering life in the jungle. The domestic problems caused by householders opting out of their social responsibilities must surely have been immense. On occasion it would seem to have occurred with little disruption:

Now, sir, I had four wives, young girls, and I went and spoke to them thus: 'Sisters, I have embraced the five rules of training in the holy life. Who wishes may enjoy the wealth of this place, or may do deeds of merit, or may go to her own relations and family; or is there some man you desire to whom I may give you?' And when I stopped speaking, the eldest wife said to me: 'Sir, give me to such and such a man!' Then I had that man sent for; and, taking my wife by the left hand and holding the waterpot in my right, I cleansed that man [by an act of dedication]. Yet I was not a whit discomfited at parting with my wife (A iv 210).

Perhaps he was not 'discomfited', but what of the wives themselves? At least, on another occasion, one such wife was not at all pleased—and, indeed, she is reported to have sought out her ex-husband monk, placed their young son on the ground before him and demanded that he support her and his child. The monk, however, completely ignored them both; and, following her departure, the Buddha, who had 'beheld her rudeness from afar', uttered a verse in praise of the monk's steadfast detachment (Ud 5f).

As the Buddha's following increased, the fear of the social upheaval to which this was giving rise quickly spread:



Now at that time very distinguished young men belonging to respectable families in Magadha were living the holy life under the Lord. People looked down upon, criticised, spread it about, saying: 'The recluse Gotama gets along by making [us] childless, the recluse Gotama gets along by making [us] widows, the recluse Gotama gets along by breaking up families . . . Who now will be led away by him?' (Vin i 43).

Parental opposition to their sons becoming followers was equally intense; and we shall have occasion later to consider one such instance. Moreover, it is stated on several occasions that:

Although his parents were unwilling and tears poured down their cheeks, the recluse Gotama, having cut off hair and beard and donned saffron robes, went forth from home into homelessness (D i 115; M i 163; ii 166).

Beside the real—or at least envisaged—soteriological dangers that would stem from the failure to embark on the spiritual quest, such petty social consideration paled into insignificance. When asked whether he had been diligent in matters spiritual, the brahmin Dhaññañjaṇi complains:

How could I be diligent, good Saṅgitta, when there are my parents to support, my wife and children to support, my slaves, servants and work-people to support, when there are services to perform for friends and acquaintances, services to perform for kith and kin, services to perform for guests, rites to perform for the ancestors, rites to perform for the gods, duties to perform for the king—and this body too must be satisfied and looked after!

to which Saṅgitta replies:

What do you think about this, Dhaññañjaṇi? Suppose someone failed to live the holy life because of his parents (and so on); because of this failure . . . the guardians of Niraya Hell might drag him off to their hell. Would he gain anything by saying: 'I failed to live the holy life because of my parents (and so forth)'? (M ii 186f),

the implication being that the guardians of that hell would be completely unimpressed by such excuses. Spiritual success is thus not without its price—and one may feel that the price demanded by the Buddha far exceeds the so-called austerities that some maintain is demanded of the followers of the modern cults. As we have seen, it is sense-pleasures and attachment to them that presents the major stumbling-block to liberation. They are likened to a pit of glowing embers and an impaling stake (M i 132); and:

Indeed, that Prince Jayasena, living as he does in the midst of sense-pleasures, enjoying sense-pleasures, being consumed by thoughts of sense-pleasures, burning with the fever of sense-pleasures, eager in the search for sense-pleasures, should know, see, attain or realise that which can be known . . . realised by renunciation—such a situation does not exist (M iii 131).



This is, as already stated, because sense-pleasures are the sphere of Maṛa:

The man who lives contemplating pleasure, with senses unrestrained, in food immoderate, lazy, inert—him, verily, Maṛa overthrows as a wind a weak tree (Dhp 7).

There is, then, the need to 'smash out Maṛa'—and the principal way in which this can be accomplished is by regulating, and minimising, sensory experiences. Delight in worldly activity, chatter and gossip, sleep, in keeping company with others, being with the senses unguarded, and lack of moderation in eating all lead to the downfall of a monk (A iii 116, 173, 292f, 309f; iv 22; It 71). Such failure can be prevented only through the adoption of a lifestyle of excessive sensory deprivation. One must, as we have seen, sever all connections with family and friends, dispose of all possessions and embark upon a solitary and nomadic existence in the jungle, living at the feet of trees and clad only in robes made up from rags gathered from rubbish-heaps, and sustaining oneself on whatever scraps are to be gained by begging on the streets. Monks are expected, except when discussing matters of doctrine, to observe the 'ariyan silence' (Ud 11); they must practise strict chastity and sleep as little as possible (It 41). They are, in addition, required to frequent funerary grounds, meditating on the rotten, bloated and stinking corpses in an attempt at freeing themselves from all lust and attachment for the human body—a practice which, on occasion, apparently had disastrous consequences:

So those monks, saying: 'The Lord has in divers ways spoken on the subject of the unlovely . . . has spoken in praise of meditation on the unlovely', spent their time given to meditation on the unlovely in all its varied applications. As to this body, they worried about it, felt shame and loathing for it, and sought for a weapon to slay themselves. Nay, as many as ten monks did so in a single day; even twenty, thirty of them slew themselves in a single day (S v 320; cp S iv 62).

All forms of personal adornment had to be renounced and the luxury even of what we might consider good social ethics abandoned, since these were, according to the Buddha, rooted in desire. The Buddha, learning that the monk Phagguna got angry when other monks spoke in dispraise of certain nuns, instructed him that he should get rid of those desires that are worldly and train himself thus: 'Neither will my mind become perverted, nor will I utter an evil speech, but kindly and compassionate will I dwell with a mind of friendliness and void of hatred', even if anyone were to give a blow to the nuns, whether with the hand, a clod of earth, a stick or a weapon even (M i 123f; cp S iv 329).

The fiercely austere lifestyle of the solitary monk, isolated from society in the depths of the jungle where he was devoid of any comforts, was thus one designed to smash out Maṛa by means of almost total sensory deprivation. In



the jungle itself he would sleep little, if at all, spending the entire night in meditational exercises aimed at lifting him out of sensory consciousness altogether; whilst in the morning he would emerge, with senses guarded against the possibility of being entranced by the sight of women with dishevelled clothing (M i 462; A iii 95), and enter the villages in search of alms, which usually took the form of the left-overs in the cooking-pot that remained after the family had finished its morning meal. Some, it is true, elected to take on additional hardships, such as dwelling under a given tree and sustaining themselves entirely on windfalls that fell within their reach. But this should not be allowed to obscure the fact that, apart from these additional, and voluntary hardships, all else—every aspect of daily life—was strictly dictated by the Buddha. It was simply not open to the monk to decide even when he should eat. Some monks, it seems, took to eating in the evening as well as in the morning and during the day, maintaining that they had not seemed to have suffered any disadvantage thereby (M i 474). At this the Buddha is somewhat outraged—if such an enlightened and passionless being can be—and insists that it is simply not open to the monk to decide that he will or will not do this or that aspect of the teaching as and whether it suits him:

For a disciple who has faith in the Teacher's instruction and lives in unison with it, monks, it is a principle that: 'The Teacher is the Lord, a disciple am I; the Lord knows, I do not know' . . . [just as] it is a principle that: 'Gladly would I be reduced to skin and sinews and bone and let my body's flesh and blood dry up if there came to be a vortex of energy so that that which is not [yet] won might be won by human strength, by human striving' (M i 480f).

That is to say, the disciple has to submit himself entirely to injunctions imposed upon him by the Buddha, whether these be in the realm of dietary restrictions or indeed what may appear to us (and perhaps to the disciple himself) as rather strange, if not altogether anti-social, ethical behaviour. It is therefore little wonder that, immediately following the death of the Buddha, at least one monk is recorded as having expressed his relief saying:

Enough, friends! Don't weep, don't lament! Well rid are we of the Great Recluse—we, who were oppressed with his 'This befits you, this befits you not', may now do what we wish and not have to do what we do not wish (D ii 162).

Such obedience is thus a limitation of the individual's will and one accepted, it should be noted, on the basis of faith in the Buddha's enlightenment, which is by necessity a blind faith since it is a principle completely incapable of verification (S v 160)—though it is re-inforced, as with some of the more modern cults, by repeated utterances of notions of their own supremacy, such as:

They who have faith in the Buddha have faith in the best; of those who have faith in



the best the result is the best . . . [and] as compared with orders and companies, the order of the Buddha's disciples is the best (It 88);

and:

The Lord's order of disciples is of good conduct, the Lord's order of disciples is of upright conduct, the Lord's order of disciples is of right conduct, the Lord's order of disciples is of proper conduct . . . The Lord's order of disciples is worthy of sacrifice, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of the añjali-salute; it is the unsurpassed merit-field for the world (D iii 227 & passim);

whereas the ordinary man in the street, still dominated by Mañā, is referred to simply as rubbish:

Just as on a rubbish heap swept up on a main road a purely fragrant, delightful lotus might spring up,

Even so amidst those rubbish heaps [of men] does the disciple of the Perfectly Enlightened One outshine in insight the blind outsider (Dhp 58-59).

This in some way goes to explain the otherwise curious phenomenon in which the Buddha was criticised by the Jains for going on tour, together with a great company of monks, for alms in a place stricken with famine and in which its crops had grown to mere stubs. Surely, it is claimed, this contravenes the claim of the Buddha to extol consideration, carefulness and compassion for lay-people, since it must result in destruction, loss and injury for such people. This, the Buddha says, yet again, is to misrepresent him and such misrepresentation results in its advocates being cast into hell. For formerly those people were:

Rich, very rich, of exceeding great wealth, abounding in gold and silver, abounding in sources of wealth, abounding in wealth of crops. [And] all that wealth was amassed through charity (S iv 324).

Putting it more bluntly, we may say that future economic success is dependent upon merit earned through acts of charity sown in the unsurpassed merit-field provided by the Buddha's disciples; and that by seeking alms, even in time of famine, the Buddha is, in short, providing those who are, after all, Mañā's slaves with the prospect, not only of good crops in the future, but even also with a ticket to heaven:

Gifts are to be given with discrimination—then what is given is of great fruit. When gifts have been given with discrimination their donors go to heaven.

Giving with discrimination is praised by the Sugata. That which is given to those who are worthy of donations here in this world of the living is of great fruit as is seed sown in a field of fertile soil (Pv II 9<sup>73-74</sup>).



As the Petavatthu<sup>9</sup> repeatedly tells us, those who fail to show charity to monks find, in the next life, that they lack the means of sustaining themselves and suffer the fate of the hungry ghost unable to satisfy an enormous appetite;

Whilst those unselfish givers who in the past did lovely deeds will fill heaven and light up the Nandana Grove (Pv III 1<sup>15</sup>).

To conclude it may be interesting to take a 'case history' which highlights some of the points already discussed. Raṭṭhapāla (M ii 55ff), a young man of good family, encounters the Buddha, comes under his spell by means of his brainwashing technique, and, as a result, judges the household life too restricting for living the holy life and so decides to shave off his hair and beard and go forth into the homeless life of the monk. However, he is told by the Buddha that he must first secure the consent of his parents. This they refuse to give and, moreover, not only try to dissuade him, extolling the virtues of a life given over to sensual pursuits, but also attempt emotional blackmail:

You, dear Raṭṭhapāla, are our only child, dear and beloved, you live in comfort and are well cared for; you, dear Raṭṭhapāla, do not know anything of suffering. Get up, dear Raṭṭhapāla, eat and drink and amuse yourself; eating, drinking, amusing yourself you can enjoy diverting yourself with sense-pleasures and doing meritorious things. We do not consent that you should go forth from home into homelessness. If you were to die we should be desolate without you. How could we, while you are living, consent to your going forth from home into homelessness?

Raṭṭhapāla is, however, quite unimpressed and:

Not receiving his parents' consent, lay down there on the bare ground and said: 'Here there will be death for me or going forth'.

At this, his parents solicit the help of his friends who at first also seek to discourage him but, in the process, realise the obstinacy of his resolve and successfully persuade his parents to allow him his wish—which they do on the condition that he come back and visit them at a later date.

Raṭṭhapāla goes forth and in the course of time attains liberation. Then, remembering his parents' former stipulation, he asks leave of the Buddha to visit his parents, whereupon:

The Lord with his mind carefully reflected on the venerable Raṭṭhapāla's reasoning of mind. When the Lord knew that it was impossible for the venerable Raṭṭhapāla, throwing off the training, to return to the secular life, then the Lord spoke thus to the venerable Raṭṭhapāla: 'Do now, Raṭṭhapāla, that for which you think it is the right time'.

It is perhaps worthy of note that such permission was granted only when it was clear that the proposed return visit to the family circle would not result in



Raṭṭhapāla's defection. Raṭṭhapāla arrives outside his former home and is seen by his father. But his father seemingly does not recognise him as his former son and, clearly still smarting with disaffection for the Buddha and his followers, not only refuses him any almsfood but also abuses him saying, 'Our only son, dear and beloved, has gone forth amongst these shaveling recluses'—which must call to mind the negative connotations of such expressions noted earlier. At this point the family slavewoman emerges from the house intending to throw out the previous evening's barley-gruel; but at Raṭṭhapāla's suggestion (which in fact contravenes the rule of silence during an almsround—cp PS 157<sup>9</sup>) she instead tips it into his almsbowl—and as she does so, she recognises his hands and feet and voice. She informs his mother of his return and so overjoyed is his mother that she renders the slave a freed woman. Raṭṭhapāla is subsequently approached by his father saying:

Can it be, dear Raṭṭhapāla, that you are eating last evening's barley-gruel? Surely, dear Raṭṭhapāla, you should come into your own home?

Raṭṭhapāla replies:

Where, householder, is there a home for us who have gone forth from home into homelessness? We are houseless ones, householder. I did come to your home, householder, but I received neither alms there nor a refusal<sup>10</sup>; all I received was abuse,

adding that in any case he has done with eating for the day. Raṭṭhapāla's reply may strike us as both somewhat haughty and unnecessarily cold-hearted, but we should not forget that, in his eyes, he is no longer the man's son. That son died on the day he was reborn a spiritual son of the Buddha; and he is, like the traditional Hindu sannyāsin, breaking the rules by returning to his former home. Or perhaps it is because he foresees that his father is already plotting an attempt at deprogramming him, for having invited Raṭṭhapāla for a meal on the following day, he both hides a huge pile of gold behind screens and also summons Raṭṭhapāla's former wives, charging them to adorn themselves with things once liked by him.

In due course Raṭṭhapāla enters and seats himself in readiness for the meal, whereupon his father draws back the screens and says:

This, dear Raṭṭhapāla, is your mother's wealth, the other is your father's, the other your paternal grandfather's. It is possible, dear Raṭṭhapāla, both to enjoy riches and do meritorious things. Come you, dear Raṭṭhapāla, throwing off the training and returning to the secular life, enjoy riches and do meritorious things,

a suggestion that demonstrates that he is completely unaware of there being anything to the Buddha's teaching other than its exoteric form and thus why it is impossible that Raṭṭhapāla, no longer his son, can revert to his former



identity. Raṭṭhapāla responds by stating that his father would be best advised to dump the whole lot in the river Ganges. Unwilling to concede defeat, his father then brings in his former wives, who take him by the feet and ask him, reminiscent of the Nanda episode mentioned above, what kind of nymphs he hopes to secure by living the holy life. Raṭṭhapāla, in denying this to be the goal that he seeks, addresses them as 'sisters', at which they fall down fainting. He then turns to his father saying:

If you would give food, householder, then give it—but do not annoy us!;  
and, finally, following the meal—and just to show that the attempted de-  
programming has failed—departs uttering the following verses:

See the pranked-out puppet-shape, a mass of sores, a congeries,  
afflicted, much thought of, for which there is never stability.

See the pranked-out form with jewels and rings,  
the bones sheathed in skin, resplendent with the clothes,

The feet dyed with lac, the face with powder smeared—  
enough for delusion of a fool, but not for the quester of the Beyond.

Hair braided eightfold, eyes with collyrium smeared—  
enough for delusion of a fool, but not for the quester of the Beyond.

Like a new collyrium-box, embossed, is the foul body, adorned—  
enough for delusion of a fool, but not for the quester of the Beyond.

The trapper set the snare; the deer touched not the net.

Having eaten the crop, we go while the deer-catchers lament.

The various passages and incidents cited in this discussion are, in the main, simply those that sprang to mind—and they could, no doubt, be supplemented by many, many more (and quite possibly of an even more compelling nature) given a more thorough and systematic survey of these texts which purport to record events that took place in the Buddha's own lifetime. However, it should not be forgotten that what was true of Buddhism then is still largely true of Buddhism today; and if anything has changed it is *our* evaluation of it. In its day it seems to have suffered very much the same sort of reception that is now being endured by the new religious movements. But by now the flame has died down, the fire smothered by the cloak of antiquity. When criticised for breaking up families, as well as when falsely accused by religious rivals of murdering a female wanderer, the Buddha pronounced that:

This noise, monks, will not last long. It will last for just seven days. After seven days it will vanish away (Vin i 43; Ud 45).

'Seven days' was perhaps a bit of an understatement, but he was eventually



proved right—which must give the present-day new religious movements some hope for the future. For, indeed, the fact that much the same criticisms now hurled against them were already being voiced in the Gangetic plains in the fifth century B.C. must surely go to show that there is, after all is said and done, very little that is new under the sun—or even the Reverend Moon!

## NOTES

- 1 Muni is a Pali term meaning 'Sage' and is a frequently encountered epithet of the Buddha—as, for instance, in the expression Śākyamuni, or 'the Sage of the Sakyans'.
- 2 It may well be for this very reason that Mahāvīra, the founder of the Jains, found it expedient to claim that he was only a reformer and the last in a line of twenty-four Tirthankaras, and that the Buddha, too, spoke of various numbers of Buddhas that had preceded him.
- 3 Ronald Enroth, *Youth, Brainwashing and the Extremist Cults*, Exeter, 1977, p 12.
- 4 A reference to the Puruṣa Sūkta of the R̥g Veda (X 90) in which the origin of the social classes of India is traced to the dismemberment of the Primal Man (the kinsman), the top three twice-born classes of the brahmin, kṣatriya and vaiśya having been born from his mouth (or head), arms and thighs respectively, whilst the lowest, the despised śūdra, came from his feet. The claim made later in this paper that the Buddha's converts underwent a spiritual rebirth (which would thus render them twice-born) and that they had been so born from the Buddha's mouth, plus the fact that the Buddha styles himself a brahmin, all assume familiarity with this myth.
- 5 The Pali Canon which, it is believed, contains the recorded utterances of the Buddha himself forms the basis of the Theravāda school of Buddhism and is regarded by many as the earliest stratum of Buddhist literature.
- 6 māyāvin; some may contest my rendering of this term as 'brainwasher'. Literally it denotes one who possesses māyā, the power of delusion, and can be used to denote a conjuror or magician who is able to delude or deceive his audience through exercise of his skill, just as one who practises his art or craft may be said to be 'artful' or 'crafty'. That the charge was a pernicious one can be seen from the fact that the demon-lord Sambara is said to have been cooked in hell for having exercised this same skill (SA i 355).
- 7 Nibbāna (Sanskrit nirvāṇa) is the goal of those pursuing the esoteric teaching of the Buddha and denotes, amongst other things, liberation in the sense of complete freedom from further involvement in the cycle of rebirth.
- 8 The phenomenon of the progressive talk and associated issues is dealt with in my doctoral dissertation *Thus They Once Heard—Oral Initiation in the Pali Nikāyas*, University of Lancaster, 1980. It remains, at present, unpublished. See also my article 'The progressive talk—the Buddha's inducement of a vision of nibbāna through an altered state of consciousness', in *Under the Shade of a Coolibah Tree: Australian Studies in Consciousness*, ed. R. A. Hutch and P. G. Fenner, University Press of America, 1984, pp 123–144.
- 9 The Petavatthu is a text entirely given over to describing the unfortunate circumstances of the hungry ghosts and the deeds in a past life—almost always miserliness and a general failure to show charity to monks—that resulted in their present plight. See *Peta Stories* (translated by U Ba Kyaw and P. Masefield), Pali



Text Society, London 1980, which contains a translation of both the stories themselves and also their traditional commentary. Its sister volume, the *Vimānavatthu*, deals, on the contrary, with the post-mortem delights of happiness of those who were sufficiently prudent, in a past life, to show charity to monks. My translation of it and its commentary is shortly to be published by the Pali Text Society, London.

- 10 A 'refusal' would mean that without waiting longer the monk could pass on to the next house where he might receive the necessary alms (MLS ii 256<sup>2</sup>).

### ABBREVIATIONS

(All references are to issues of the Pali Text Society, London)

A	Āṅguttaranikāya
D	Dīghanikāya
Dhp	Dhammapada
It	Itivuttaka
M	Majjhimanikāya
MLS	Middle Length Sayings
PS	Peta Stories
Pv	Petavatthu
S	Saṃyuttanikāya
SA	Commentary on S
Ud	Udāna
Vin	Vinayapiṭaka

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# FOOD AND FREEDOM

## THE JAINA SECTARIAN DEBATE ON THE NATURE OF THE KEVALIN

**Paul Dundas**

It is hardly controversial to say that Jainism has been ill served by western students of South Asian religions. Whilst the last twenty years or so have seen a massive increase in the description and interpretation of Hinduism and Buddhism as both textual and living entities, there has been no comparable attempt to explore Jaina civilisation, and its vast literary heritage, its history and contemporary institutions have been largely ignored. Certainly there has been a persistent interest in the religion on the part of a small number of continental scholars, concerned in the main with the elucidation of canonical texts, but British and American researchers have not emulated this, R. Williams' monograph on the medieval writings describing the idealised behaviour of the laity being the only comparatively recent work by an English speaking scholar to deal seriously with the Jaina religion.<sup>1</sup>

The reason for this neglect deserves consideration. It is true that few western libraries possess specialist collections of Jaina literature but as such collections do exist in India, this is not an insuperable obstacle. When they have been studied, Jaina texts are sometimes castigated for their aridity,<sup>2</sup> but such judgements do little more than reflect an unwillingness to come to terms with a different idiom. If tedium be a criterion, and it should not, then Jaina literature is never any more tedious than Buddhist *Abhidharma* texts which have received serious consideration by western scholars. To my mind, this neglect of Jainism can be traced, with some plausibility, to a perception of the religion which is best exemplified in Mrs Sinclair Stevenson's book, *The Heart of Jainism*.<sup>3</sup> Written from a background of Christian missionary work in Gujarat, this work, published over seventy years ago (being recently reprinted in India), is still frequently cited in bibliographies and, as a standard secondary source, exemplifies what may not unfairly be regarded as a general attitude towards Jainism in the English-speaking world. The title of Mrs Stevenson's book is heavily ironic: for her, the 'heart' of Jainism is that it has an empty heart, the very nature of the religion ensuring that there is a spiritual vacuum



at its centre, a fact of which, she assures us, its adherents are aware. The closing chapter of 'The Heart of Jainism', in which this view is adumbrated and the inevitable unfavourable comparison with Christianity made, undoubtedly seems somewhat dated today but the detailed, if often highly inaccurate, picture presented in the rest of the book of the apparently relentless asceticism of Jaina monks and the grim and cheerless probity of the lay community which supports them has, I feel, served to engender and sustain a highly resilient prejudice according to which Jainism is seen as grey and unappealing, as austere as its followers who are themselves negligible in number and therefore in interest, its tenets less profound than those of Buddhism, its mythology less spectacular than that of Hinduism. Even anthropology, which has done so much to broaden our awareness of South Asian religions, appears to confirm these stereotyped judgements, being content to define Jainism as functionally the equivalent of a Hindu caste, a conclusion which may well be true but which has yet to be convincingly demonstrated. It is not too extravagant to suggest that the only memorable statement ever made about Jainism by an anthropologist is Lévi-Strauss's somewhat frivolous comparison of the ornate Jaina temples in Calcutta with high-class Victorian bordellos.

It surely cannot be denied that our appreciation of the universe of discourse of South Asian culture is diminished if due consideration is not given to the role played by Jainism, as the development of South Indian history makes clear. The evidence of literary, epigraphical and archaeological remains, as well as the statements of Chinese travellers, are obvious testimony to the hold which Jainism had over South India for almost a millenium, at least among the noble and mercantile classes.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately historians have given little real explanation of how such a situation came about and all too often tend to write as if Jainism's sole function in this area was to serve as a convenient repository of 'negative' values against which the so-called Hindu 'renaissance' could react. Yet important questions remain to be answered. If Jainism, as an ostensibly atheist religion, was initially attractive because the basic characteristics of southern religion were 'anthropocentrism' and 'humanism', 'then how did the transcendent goals towards which Jainism is firmly oriented fit into such a belief system? Alternatively, if the main attraction to its many noble followers, such as kings and their feudatories, was a socio-political one in that Jainism was both aryan and capable of providing an alternative ideology of kingship, what were the institutions, mythical or otherwise, which supported and validated a Jaina kingdom?' I do not suggest that there are necessarily easy answers to these questions but it nonetheless seems obvious that our picture of a significant period of ancient and medieval Indian civilisation will remain incomplete until serious investigation into Jainism's contribution to it is undertaken.



In this paper, I propose to deal with a question which should cast light on Jainism for two reasons: firstly, because it involves the *kevalin*, the figure who by his spiritual attainments stands at the centre of the religion and secondly, because, as a subject of sectarian debate, it was conducted in purely Jaina terms. The point at issue was whether the *kevalin* experienced hunger and thus needed to consume food. The participants in the debate were members of the two main divisions of the religion: the *Śvetāmbaras*, the 'White-clad' and the *Digambaras*, the 'Space-clad'.

According to Śvetāmbara tradition, there have occurred eight schisms or, more literally, denials, evasions (*nihnava*) of the faith.<sup>8</sup> The first of these dates back to the days of Mahāvīra himself (6th century BC), the twenty-fourth 'fordmaker' (*tīrthaṅkara*), whose son-in-law Jamālī denied that an action which was in the process of being performed was the equivalent of an action which had been completed, a notion which was extremely important for the Jaina explanation of the operation of karma.<sup>9</sup> For the great Hemacandra, writing in the twelfth century AD, Jamālī is no more than an example of somebody who is aware of the correct state of affairs but is deluded into saying exactly the opposite,<sup>10</sup> and indeed the first seven of these heresies, involving as they did fairly straightforward matters of interpretation of metaphysical points of the doctrine, could quite easily be corrected by the simple expedient of showing their illogicality. However the eighth heresy, which involved a disagreement over correct practice, had serious implications, orthopraxy being as always more important than orthodoxy in the Indian context. For the Śvetāmbaras, the eighth schism arose some six hundred and nine years after Mahāvīra's *nirvāṇa* with an apostate monk called Śivabhūti. This personage, who had become a monk for the wrong reasons in the first place (the result of a fit of pique after being locked out one night by his mother-in-law) and in the wrong manner (ordaining himself), hears his preceptor preaching about those monks who followed the *jinakalpa* way (i.e. those who emulated the *tīrthaṅkaras*) which could involve the abandonment of clothes.<sup>11</sup> Despite his teacher's assurance that this practice had finished soon after Mahāvīra's death, Śivabhūti in arrogance decides that he himself is worthy of imitating the *tīrthaṅkaras* and gives up the wearing of clothes. Rejected by his preceptor, he persuades his sister, a nun, to adopt nudity and follow him, the hapless girl finally being persuaded of her error by a prostitute worried about the effect on trade. It is Śivabhūti and his immediate followers who are the founders of the heretical Digambara sect.

According to Digambara tradition, the Śvetāmbaras are no more than backsliders, the descendents of a section of the community who remained in the north during a famine while the rest of their co-religionists migrated to the south, the northern monks subsequently taking to the heretical practice of wearing clothes. How, the Digambaras ask, could a monk of true religious



aspiration cover himself with robes which represent shame and worldly possessions, both of which should have been renounced?

The traditional stories which purport to explain how the schism came about are useful for defining general attitudes but very little else. The significant feature of these accounts is not so much their undoubted lateness (the earliest literary version of the Digambara story seems to be the one found in the tenth century Hariṣeṇa's *Bṛhatkathākośa*)<sup>12</sup> but more specifically their posteriority to the Council of Valabhī which took place in either 453 AD or 466 AD<sup>13</sup> when the final, official version of a collection of old texts which can for convenience be designated 'canonical' was produced.<sup>14</sup> It is the rejection by our group of this canon and the editorial process which gave rise to it which should be considered the truly important factor leading to the division of the community. As Jainism moved out of its original heartland in the Ganges basin and spread throughout India, its lines of communication must have been extended enormously, with the result that certain aspects and interpretations of behaviour about which tradition was ambiguous or unconcerned, such as the wearing of clothes by monks.<sup>15</sup> may have been fixed among certain groups of monks and ignored by others. It was the final stabilising of a previously fluid oral tradition by a sizable proportion of the community whose authority, in the last resort, probably rested on little more than residence in areas within range of the scene of the council, which is the pivotal factor responsible for the rise of a fully selfaware Digambara sect, unwilling to accept a body of scriptures which had clearly been manipulated and loyal to the orthopraxy sanctioned by the tradition which it regarded as authoritative.<sup>16</sup>

It is both easy and difficult to assess the nature of relations between the two groups after the division had taken place. On the doctrinal level, there was virtually complete accord, with the Digambaras playing a vital role in the shaping and articulating of a general Jaina standpoint with a view to controverting the Hindus and the Buddhists.<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, owing to lack of evidence, we are restricted in our ability to form a clear impression of how the two sects interacted on the social level. The question of orthopraxy, however, must always have been a source of disagreement and literary references make clear that there was on occasion serious antipathy between members of the two groups. The story of the monk Datta told by the eleventh century Śvetāmbara, Jayasimhasūri, in his Prākṛit story collection, the *Kathākośaprakaraṇa*<sup>18</sup>, is symptomatic of this. Datta is sent on an errand to a neighbouring village by the preceptor of his monastic group. On arriving at the village in the evening, he cannot obtain lodging and so enters a Digambara temple to spend the night there. Some Digambara laymen see him going in and, 'becoming inimical to him for no reason' (*nikkāraṇaveria*), secretly hire a prostitute and send her off to seduce him. But Datta does not respond to her



blandishments during the night and instead wins her over by his imperturbability. She informs him why she has been sent and he tells her to go to sleep and thus earn her fee. He then burns all his monastic regalia with the aid of a lamp and taking up an old peacock feather whisk which is lying in the temple assumes the guise of a Digambara monk. The next morning, the laymen gleefully summon the villagers to witness a Śvetāmbara monk consorting with a prostitute but, when the temple doors are opened, it is the naked Datta who appears with his arm around the girl. The assembled crowd shout out, 'This is a Digambara (*khavaṇaya*) consorting with a prostitute!'; to which Datta asks why they are laughing at him alone, for other Digambara monks spend the night with prostitutes. Then the laymen are mocked by the villagers: 'You are not in possession of the doctrine taught by the omniscient ones' (*pakkho savvannuppaṇṇo*).

The point of this story revolves around monastic behaviour, with correct doctrine being equated with orthopraxy,<sup>19</sup> and the Digambaras play a part normally reserved in Jaina *kathā* literature for the hated Buddhists. More interesting still, since an actual historical event is involved, are the accounts of the famous debate between the Śvetāmbara Vādidevasūri and the Digambara Kumudacandra which took place in Anahilla-ṣaṭṭan in Gujarat in 1125 AD under the auspices of the Caulukya monarch Jayasīṃha Siddharāja, an event which clearly caught the imagination of the Śvetāmbara community, judging by the frequency of its depiction on manuscript covers.<sup>20</sup> There are two extended accounts of this event, that of Prabhācandra (13th century) in his *Prabhāvakacarita*<sup>21</sup> ('Deeds of the Eminent') and that of Merutuṅga (14th century) in his *Prabandhacintāmaṇi* ('Wishing-stone of Stories').<sup>22</sup> Both writers are Śvetāmbara, Merutuṅga's account being an episode in his panegyric of the idealised Jaina king, Siddharāja, while, for Prabhācandra, the debate is the climax of his hagiography of Vādideva. There can be little doubt that Kumudacandra's personality and behaviour are viciously travestied by these writers in the name of sectarian polemic but, at the same time, it seems clear that he succumbed to the greater cogency of the Śvetāmbara's argument. Kumudacandra came from Kārṇāṭaka, the Digambara stronghold, and his aim was to engage prominent Śvetāmbaras in Gujarat in debate, the result of which would determine whether Gujarat adopted the Digambara version of Jainism or not. Prior to the debate, the Goddess of Speech appears to Vādideva and advises him to 'put forward as a net an introduction of the eighty-four ensnaring dilemmas dealing with the controversy with the Digambaras of the great commentary on the *Uttarādhyāyana*, terrible to disputants as a vampire'.<sup>23</sup> Not only is Kumudacandra arrogant and brutal (he and his followers have previously harassed Vādideva's sister, a nun), he is also ignorant. At the outset of the debate he tentatively puts forward his views about the topics in dispute



between the two sects, whether the enlightened need food, whether monks can wear clothes and whether women can attain salvation, but Vādideva overwhelms him with traditional, time-honoured Svetāmbara arguments. In desperation, Kumudacandra tries to silence his opponent by magically inserting a ball of wool into Vādideva's throat but he finally has to admit defeat when he is proved to be ignorant of Sanskrit grammar and, expelled by the king, he slinks off to die of shame. Thus, we are told, the Śvetāmbara doctrine became the 'official' Jainism of Gujarat and Vādideva 'established an alms-house for *kevalins* and their right of eating'.<sup>24</sup>

The point of this last remark is that Vādideva proved conclusively that the *kevalin* experiences hunger and therefore needs to take food. Nothing is said of the arguments used, other than that they were those of Śāntisūri, the commentator on the *Uttarādhyaṇasūtra* (the *Prabhāvakacarita* does give us some information about the Śvetāmbara's tactics over the question of *nirvāṇa* for women)<sup>25</sup> and it might be concluded that the problem is marginal, with the rejection of both the Valabhī canon and monastic wearing of clothes being the central issues for the Digambaras, the controversy over the *kevalin* merely serving to define sectarian differences more precisely. However, it does seem unlikely that any question which touched upon the nature of the enlightened man could ever be peripheral and a consideration of the comparable Buddhist situation should alert us to the importance of this matter for Jainism. Early Buddhist texts often make passing reference to various pains and illnesses which afflicted the Buddha during his lifetime: backache, dysentery and so on. The inevitable question asked by later Buddhists who regarded such scriptural statements as significant was how the Buddha, a perfect being, could be subject to such distress. There were a variety of attempts to come to terms with this problem (e.g., he was still under the influence of some kinds of karma), the end result being the Mahāyāna conclusion that the illnesses of the Buddha were not real since his body was merely a manifestation of the *dharmakāya*, the totality of all the qualities which make up a Buddha.<sup>26</sup> The Jaina discussion about the *kevalin* had different ramifications, but more than a millenium of sectarian polemic over whether he experiences hunger and how any food that he might take affects his state of enlightenment demonstrates that this is a matter which lies at the very heart of the Jaina religion.

There are innumerable descriptions and definitions of the *kevalin* in Jaina literature.<sup>27</sup> The precise meaning of the term is 'possessing that (knowledge) which is isolated, unique'. There is no real controversy about the nature of *kevala* knowledge between the sects and, postponing an account of how it comes about, it can best be defined both as 'omniscience' in the literal sense of that knowledge which enables its possessor to know all substances in all their possible modifications including their temporal aspects<sup>28</sup> and, more indirectly,



'the final consummation of moral, religious and spiritual life'<sup>29</sup> or simply 'self-knowledge'.<sup>30</sup> It is important to establish the difference between the *kevalin* who is the enlightened and perfect man and the *tīrthaṅkara*. A *tīrthaṅkara* is not only a person who has attained *kevala* knowledge but is also one of the twenty-four figures who make a *tīrtha*. This word may be taken in the sense of 'ford (across the river of rebirth)' but in canonical terms it is more than that, the *tīrtha* being both the doctrine and the community.<sup>31</sup> A *tīrtha* maker is a *kevalin* who appears at periodic intervals to establish a community by preaching the doctrine whereas a *kevalin* is merely an exalted member of the community.<sup>32</sup> While there are famous *kevalins* in Jaina tradition such as Bāhubali, the son of the first *tīrthaṅkara* Rṣabha and the first individual of this world-age to achieve liberation,<sup>33</sup> and Jambū, one of Mahāvīra's closest disciples and the last individual of this world-age to achieve liberation,<sup>34</sup> it nonetheless seems clear to me that when the Śvetāmbara and Digambara polemicists discuss whether the *kevalin* takes food, they are implicitly referring to the *tīrthaṅkara* and attempting to define the nature of the promulgator of the true doctrine.<sup>35</sup>

One of the most informative accounts of the *kevalin* (in the guise of *tīrthaṅkara*) and his qualities is the *Sirivīratthui*, the eulogy of Mahāvīra which occupies the sixth chapter of the first book of the *Sūyagaḍaṃgasutta*,<sup>36</sup> one of the oldest and most authoritative texts of the canon. In this passage, Jambū is depicted as asking Sudharman, another of Mahāvīra's close disciples, to describe their master, and the twenty-seven verses in which Jambū is exhorted to conquer *saṃsāra* in the same way as Mahāvīra gives an excellent general description of the *kevalin* and his attributes. Here I single out the more significant elements of the account. Mahāvīra is a being of limitless knowledge and insight (*aṇaṃtanāṇī ya aṇaṃtadaṃsī*) but at the same time a human being who lived in the world (*cakkhupahe thiya*).<sup>37</sup> Knowing everything in all quarters of the universe, he is firm, serene and beyond the constraints of life.<sup>38</sup> He is the equal of Indra in brilliance<sup>39</sup> and Mount Meru in might.<sup>40</sup> Through his knowledge, insight and morality, he has destroyed all karma and reached liberation.<sup>41</sup> He extirpated anger, pride, greed and deceit.<sup>42</sup> Having put away all worldly things, he did not consort with women nor eat at night.<sup>43</sup> To hear the law preached by such a one ensures either deliverance or rebirth in heaven.<sup>44</sup>

It is impossible to give a hard and fast dating for the first establishment of the idea that such a highly developed individual did not suffer hunger or need to take food. Although the Śvetāmbara canonical texts, perhaps understandably, do not evince any particular interest in the *kevalin*'s food consumption, there are references which show that, for Mahāvīra in particular, eating was something perfectly natural. The best known is the episode described in the fifteenth chapter of the *Bhagavaṃsutta*<sup>45</sup> where the *tīrthaṅkara* is depicted as



recuperating after his duel of yogic power with the Ājīvika leader, Makkhali Gosāla. Mahāvīra tells one of his disciples to stop a laywoman in a nearby village from cooking two pigeons for him and instead get her to prepare a cock which has just been killed by a cat; on eating this, he recovers.<sup>46</sup> While the point of this story is doubtless to demonstrate Mahāvīra's superhuman ability to be aware of an event taking place some distance away, there is no question that Mahāvīra, many years after his enlightenment, is portrayed as taking food, irrespective of the later Śvetāmbara refusal to believe that this could have been meat.<sup>47</sup> Another reference to Mahāvīra's eating occurs in the description of the preliminaries to his debate with the brahman ascetic, Khandaga Kaccāyana, when the excellent condition of Mahāvīra's body seems to be ascribed to the fact that he is eating regularly (*viyaḍabhoī*), that is, not engaging in fasts.<sup>48</sup> Silent testimony to the *kevalin's* eating is provided, as the Śvetāmbara polemicists saw, in a text like the *Kappasutta* which refers to the first *tīrthāṅkara*, Rṣabha, following an increasingly lengthy period of fasting as he approached final release, the clear implication being that he took food at other times.<sup>49</sup> While the Digambaras would reject such passages as symptomatic of the corruption of a canon whose authority they refuse to admit, there is no doubt that the Śvetāmbara texts state unambiguously that the *kevalin* eats food to support his body, although they say nothing of hunger.

The first general statements expressing dissatisfaction with this state of affairs are to be found in the works which Digambara *ācāryas* produced in the first centuries of the Christian era, writings which were ultimately to serve as a substitute canon (the real one supposedly having disappeared) and which are still regarded as authoritative today. According to the *Samayasāra* (v.225) of Kundakunda (second-third century AD), 'desirelessness implies possessionlessness and so the "knower" does not require food or drink,'<sup>50</sup> while in another verse of Kundakunda's (*Pravacanasāra* 1.20), which was taken by medieval commentators as implying that the *kevalin* does not feel hunger, it is stated that the *kevalin* does not experience bodily happiness or unhappiness.<sup>51</sup> According to another early text, the *Kasāyapāhuḍa*, the *kevalin* has no reason to eat: it does not improve his knowledge because there is nothing greater than *kevala* knowledge, it does not involve some form of physical restraint because that has now been finished with anyway, and it has nothing to do with meditation because there is no longer anything for him to meditate upon.<sup>52</sup>

If these statements, which do not attempt to argue for their position and are somewhat ill defined, are the seeds from which the later Digambara standpoint grew, then the watershed for establishing the exact notion of the *kevalin* is Umāsvāti's *Tattvārthādhigamasūtra* (= TS; approximately second century AD). This work, which, although of almost certain Śvetāmbara provenance,<sup>53</sup> is esteemed by all Jains, summarises in aphoristic form the basics of Jain epistemology, metaphysics, cosmography and practice. The rival sectarian



perceptions crystallise around *sūtras* nine to seventeen of the ninth chapter of the TS, which deal with the *parīśahas*, the endurances or troubles which afflict the monk prior and subsequent to his enlightenment. In the words of TS 9.8, 'the *parīśahas* are to be endured so as not to deviate from the religious path and in order to cancel out karma'. This notion goes back to the *Āyāraṃgasutta*, one of the oldest portions of the canon, which describes (1.8)<sup>54</sup> the various uncomfortable and unpleasant experiences to which Mahāvīra was exposed and which he overcame before he attained enlightenment; ordinary monks are supposed to draw courage to endure the rigours of the renouncer's life from this. Other parts of the canon give a standardised list of twenty-two *parīśahas* on which TS 9.9–17 bases its description.<sup>55</sup> TS 9.9 lists these *parīśahas*: hunger, thirst, cold, heat, mosquitos, nakedness,<sup>56</sup> distaste for the religious path, women, continual moving about, sitting in solitary contemplation, lying down to sleep on uncomfortable ground, insult, violent behaviour, the obligation to beg for one's food, not getting alms, disease, discomfort caused by the pricking of grass or straw while asleep, lack of personal cleanliness, the possibility of pride when one is praised for one's behaviour and of depression when one is not, the possibility of being proud because of one's insight, the possibility of being proud because of one's scriptural knowledge and the possibility of distress because of one's lack of spiritual attainment. TS 9.10–17 goes on to state that these afflictions are experienced according to the particular spiritual stage the individual has reached and the type of karma he has eliminated. TS 9.11 and TS 9.16 taken in conjunction state that the *kevalin* experiences only eleven *parīśahas* out of the twenty-two, namely, hunger, thirst, cold, heat, mosquitos, moving about, sleeping in discomfort, violent behaviour, disease, pricking of grass and lack of personal cleanliness; in other words, the *kevalin* only suffers physical vexation and not psychological distress, these afflictions all being caused by the type of karma known as *vedanīya*, that is, feeling-producing.

As we shall see, much of the debate about the *kevalin's* hunger and food intake centres around the status of feeling-producing karma. Although Jainism's dilations upon karma and its subdivisions form the most complex, and sometimes rebarbative, area of its scholastic literature, the basic schema is fairly straightforward. There are two main groups of karma which affect the condition of the embodied soul: those which harm (*ghātīyā*) and those which do not harm (*aghātīyā*),<sup>57</sup> both groups being regarded as a form of spiritual bondage which is brought about, according to TS 8.2, by the soul attracting karmic matter as a consequence of the possession of passions (*kaṣāya*). The harming karmas are four: 'the deluding' (*mohanīya*) which brings about attachment to false views such as Buddhism and the inability to lead a spiritually correct life; 'that which obscures knowledge' (*jñānāvaraṇīya*) which at one extreme obscures the proper operation of the mind and at the



other extreme obstructs the omniscience which belongs to the soul at its purest level; 'that which obscures perception' (*darśanāvaraṇīya*) which hinders the perception coming in through the sense organs and the various kinds of knowledge;<sup>58</sup> and 'the hindrance' (*antarāya*) which obstructs the energy (*vīrya*) which is one of the soul's main characteristics when free from karma. The four non-harming karmas are, as their name suggests, essentially not deleterious to the soul: 'feeling-producing' (*vedanīya*) which determines whether the soul experiences pleasant or unpleasant things; 'name' (*nāman*) which defines the nature of the soul's next existence; 'life' (*āyus*) which establishes how long the next existence will be and 'family' (*gotra*) which defines whether the circumstances under which the soul is reborn will be conducive to the spiritual life. Now, as TS 10.1 emphatically describes *kevala* knowledge as arising from the destruction of the harming karmas alone,<sup>59</sup> it follows that the *kevalin* is still in possession of feeling-producing karma and as TS 9.11 and 9.16 state that the *kevalin* experiences eleven afflictions brought about by feeling-producing karma, of which hunger is one, it is thus established that the *kevalin* experiences hunger and so has to take food.

The history of commentary upon the TS is largely the history of Digambara commentary. Although Śvetāmbara commentaries do exist, none of them is remotely as influential as the interpretations of the three great Digambaras: Pūjyapāda (6th century AD), Akalanka (8th century AD) who incorporates the bulk of Pūjyapāda's commentary, and Vidyānanda (9th century AD) all of whom, using Umāsvāti's aphorisms as a basis, produced sophisticated statements of the Jaina position, valid (with the exception of the three main points of disagreement) as much for Śvetāmbaras as Digambaras, and thus established the grounds on which Jainas could engage in debate with their intellectual opponents. Obviously, these commentators had to confront TS 9.11 which states categorically that the *kevalin* experiences hunger but contradicts the statements of the early Digambara texts that the *kevalin* is totally beyond worldly pleasure and pain and so does not need to eat. Akalanka's explanation of TS 9.11 which I now give is representative of the standard Digambara view.<sup>60</sup>

It makes no sense to say that afflictions such as hunger which depend upon feeling-producing karma affect the *kevalin* for the simple reason that feeling-producing karma no longer has any efficacy, since the necessary concomitant elements which would make it function, that is, the harming karmas, no longer exist. Just as poison, when its destructive power has been removed by spells and medicine, does not kill when used, so feeling-producing karma, although still existing, for the man who has burnt away the fuel of the harming karmas by the fire of his meditation and in whom the four infinite qualities<sup>61</sup> are thus unimpeded, loses the strength of its concomitant elements, the harming karmas, and is thus incapable of bringing about any



effect within that same man in whom a succession of auspicious karmic matter is now accumulating without interruption.<sup>62</sup> So the *kevalin* does not experience hunger. There is no need to insert a negative into TS 9.11 as some Digambara manuscripts do. Hunger and the other ten afflictions can be said to exist metaphorically within the *kevalin* on the analogy of meditation; for just as the term 'meditation' may be applied to the *kevalin* who has removed all the hindrances to knowledge, whose knowledge is complete and who, because he possesses the rewards arising from the destruction of the dust of karma, no longer practises deep concentration, so the *kevalin* may metaphorically be said to experience the eleven afflictions because there still exist material (*dravya*) afflictions which result from feeling-producing karma, although there no longer exist spiritual (*bhāva*) afflictions involving the actual experience of hunger etc.<sup>63</sup> In other words, the *kevalin* does not experience any psychological or spiritual distress from hunger.

Elsewhere, commenting upon TS 2.4, Akalanika describes<sup>64</sup> exactly how the *kevalin's* body is supported: after completely destroying the type of karma called 'gain-hindrance' (*lābhāntarāya*),<sup>65</sup> the *kevalin* gives up eating, and then matter (*pudgala*) which is the cause of the maintenance of bodily strength, not common to other men and peculiar to the *kevalin*, extremely auspicious, fine (*sūkṣma*) and infinite, comes into contact with his body at every instant. This is called 'gain which arises from the destruction of karma' (*kṣāyikalābha*).

Akalanika's basic position is clear: feeling-producing karma may still exist in the *kevalin* but it certainly cannot give rise to any effect, whether hunger or anything else, for that would require the presence of the harming karmas.<sup>66</sup> Since the main precondition of the *kevalin's* state is that he has got rid of the harming karmas, he therefore cannot experience hunger and so does not need to eat.

The evolution of this Digambara standpoint must have taken some period of time, doubtless being debated many times in gatherings of monks prior to its articulation by the commentators on the TS, but it can probably be assumed that it was the prestige of scholars such as Pūjyapāda and Akalanika which prompted a formal Śvetāmbara response as embodied in the texts which have come down to us. Between the eighth and ninth centuries AD, there were three writers in particular who attempted to repudiate the Digambaras and confirm the canonical claim that it was proper and necessary for the *kevalin* to eat. Abhayadeva (8th century) in his commentary (*vyākhyā*) on the fifth century Siddhasena Divākara's *Sanmatitarka*<sup>67</sup> (= SMTV) treats the subject of whether the *kevalin* eats in the context of a broader discussion of the structure of *kevala* knowledge,<sup>68</sup> thus viewing it from an epistemological perspective. The famous canonical commentator Śīlānika (9th century) deals with the problem in his explication (*ṭīkā*) of the mnemonic verses (*nijjuttī*) which introduce the third section of the second book of the *Sūyagaḍaṃgasutta*<sup>69</sup> (=



SNT) describing the general nature of nourishment (*āhāra*). Śākaṭāyana (9th century),<sup>70</sup> the third polemicist, was a member of the Yāpaniya Sangha, a sect which flourished in the south for some time before finally disappearing in about the fourteenth century.<sup>71</sup> The distinguishing feature of the Yāpaniyas is that, from the point of view of orthopraxy, they followed Digambara behaviour in rejecting the wearing of clothes by monks (although not in inhabited areas); doctrinally, however, they accepted the Śvetāmbara canon as well as Śvetāmbara views on the salvation of women and the *kevalin* eating. Śākaṭāyana wrote two independent treatises (*prakaraṇa*) on these last two topics: the *Śrīnirvāṇaprakaraṇa* and the *Kevalibhuktiṭprakaraṇa* (=KBHP).<sup>72</sup> All three of these writers represent their opponents as having a more elaborate position than that adumbrated by Akalanka and it is likely that the Digambara commentators on the TS presented no more than a skeletal outline of a much more complex thesis. Although the views of Abhayadeva, Śīlāṅka and Śākaṭāyana do not always overlap, the thrust of their arguments is identical and I have therefore created a composite Śvetāmbara statement from their writings.

The Śvetāmbara approach to the *kevalin* becomes more comprehensible if consideration is first given to the precise difference between the *kevalin*, the man who has attained enlightenment and the *chadmastha* (Ardhamāgadhī *chaumattha*) literally 'the man situated in bondage, covering' in other words the ordinary monk (also called *asmadādi*, 'a person like us') who is still subject to the effects of harming karma. All *kevalins*, tīrthāṅkaras or otherwise, have been *chadmasthas*, for Jainism holds that the path towards omniscience and ultimate liberation is a rigidly gradualistic one in which the individual who has entered into the correct way of looking at things (*samyaktva*) rises through various stages of spiritual development (*guṇasthāna*)<sup>73</sup> until he reaches the thirteenth stage and becomes a *kevalin*-with-(mental and physical) activity (*sayogikevalin*) which is essentially the same as the Hindu *jīvanmukta*.<sup>74</sup> The fourteenth and final stage, that of the *kevalin*-without-(mental and physical) activity (*ayogikevalin*) lasts an extremely short time, immediately after which the soul becomes free of karma and body and rises to the top of the universe.<sup>75</sup> Obviously there must be a fundamental difference between the first twelve stages of, admittedly, gradually diminishing imperfection and the thirteenth stage of the *kevalin* and, from the canon onwards, we find these differences described in karmic, and therefore, epistemological terms. Quite simply, the *chadmastha*'s knowledge is incomplete because of the continuing influence of the harming karmas and, therefore, the soul's full potential is not realised. No matter how far the *chadmastha* has cultivated higher forms of knowledge such as clairvoyance (*avadhi*), his attainments are insignificant in the light of *kevala* knowledge which completely transcends them;<sup>76</sup> the *kevalin*, however, is completely beyond the operation of the human senses<sup>77</sup> and is thus



able to perceive such, from the *chadmastha*'s point of view, invisible things as the five fundamental entities.<sup>78</sup> In other words, the thirteenth *guṇasthāna*, the state of being a *kevalin*-with-activity, is the environment where the harming karmas, which cloud knowledge and insight and to which the *chadmastha* is still subject, are extirpated and have no effect.

A further indication that the *kevalin*'s status is far beyond that of the *chadmastha* is the former's possession of thirty-four miraculous attributes or 'eminences' (*atiśaya*).<sup>79</sup> Four of these are inborn, inasmuch as they are the result of name-karma formed in the previous existence,<sup>80</sup> and reflect the purity of the *kevalin*'s body: physical beauty and fragrance, fresh breath, flesh and blood as white as cow's milk and invisible eating and evacuation of food; eleven arise from the destruction of the harming karmas and demonstrate the *kevalin*'s ability to influence for the better his immediate surroundings, while the remaining nineteen are divine reflexes of his attainment of omniscience. But these attributes, impressive though they may be, merely serve as adjuncts to the basic fact that the *kevalin* 'knows and sees' (*jāṇai pāsai*) in a manner completely different from the *chadmastha*.<sup>81</sup>

On the basis of these factors, there would seem to be very little grounds for equating the *kevalin* and the *chadmastha* in any way. However, the Śvetāmbaras hold that, despite these differences, the physical structure of the two figures is essentially the same. The *Paṇṇavaṇṇasutta*, one of the subsidiary canonical texts (*upāṅga*), which was almost completely incorporated into the highly prestigious fifth *aṅga*, the *Bhagavaīsutta*,<sup>82</sup> describes in its twelfth and twenty-first chapters the nature, structure and function of a series of bodies of which, for the purposes of the debate on the *kevalin*, the significant one is called *audārika* (Ardhamāgadhi *orāliya*), that is, the gross, earthly body.<sup>83</sup> All creatures possessing senses, with the exception of gods and hell-beings, from the lowest earth-being to the *īrthankaras* themselves, have an *audārika* body of flesh and blood born from the womb which, while varying in size and form, has the same basic structure as other *audārika* bodies.<sup>84</sup> The variations between *audārika* bodies depend upon name-karma, the most powerful type of body being given the designation 'with structure (held together) by bolts, collars and mortices' (*vajraṣabhanārācasamphanana*) which allows the *kevalin* to withstand the fierce bodily heat generated by his hard ascetism.<sup>85</sup> Nonetheless, despite the vast differences in spiritual attainment and strength of body, the *kevalin* and the *chadmastha* are physiologically the same (with the exception of the three attainments (*atiśaya*) of the *kevalin*: his skin and blood as white as milk, his eating and evacuation of food are invisible and his hair does not grow); if the *chadmastha*'s body operates or is sustained in a certain way, then so logically must be the *kevalin*'s.<sup>86</sup>

Mere possession of an *audārika* body, however, is not sufficient grounds for eating, nor need it be assumed that there must occur, in some way, diminution



either of the body's efficacy (*śakti*) or the soul's life-karma;<sup>87</sup> rather there are other, innate reasons.<sup>88</sup> Firstly there is the quality of development (*pariṣṭi*) which is responsible for the growth of the body and senses through the agency of digested food;<sup>89</sup> that such a process of digestion does take place is guaranteed by the fact, attested in the canon, that all souls (with the exception of one-sensed creatures) possess a particular subtle, digestive body (*taijasa*) which is responsible for this activity.<sup>90</sup> In addition, karmic factors come into play, for the *kevalin*, as mentioned above, has bound life-karma in his previous existence which ensures a long life in his final birth; such a period of existence will need to be sustained by the taking of food, for it is a matter based on authoritative knowledge (*pramāṇa*) that human bodies cannot exist without food.<sup>91</sup> But the most important factor is the continued existence in the *kevalin* of feeling-producing karma which is the cause of the soul's experience of pleasant (*sātā*) and unpleasant (*asātā*) things.<sup>92</sup> This type of karma ensures that, during the entire state of being of a *kevalin*-with-activity until the moment of transition to the extremely brief fourteenth stage, the *kevalin* is still susceptible to many of the same kind of experiences, such as hunger, cold and heat, as the *chadmastha*, experiences which are not inflicted by any outside agency which would imply imperfection in the *kevalin* but are, rather, inevitable, given the way the human body works. The Digambaras make great play with the fact that the attainment of *kevala* knowledge gives rise to the full development of the soul's original, pre-karmic qualities namely bliss, energy, insight and knowledge, and so a personage possessing these qualities would have no need to eat. This is not a valid point, however, for taking food has the same status as other normal human activities such as resting (the *kevalin* has had a magically constructed pavilion built where he can do this), moving about or sitting down.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, it cannot be said that an individual's energy would increase as his hunger decreased, for that is contrary to experience.<sup>94</sup>

For the Śvetāmbaras, then, the *chadmastha* and the *kevalin* are linked by the possession of *audārika* bodies and feeling-producing karma, the latter of which has not become, in Digambara parlance, 'like a burnt rope', without any efficacy.<sup>95</sup> The fact that the *kevalin* has extirpated the harming *karmas* does not mean that he is not still subject to some sort of karmic activity; it is only the *siddha*, the liberated soul living in a state of disembodied bliss in the roof of the universe, who is completely free from worldly feeling and karma.<sup>96</sup> Certainly the *kevalin* has had some of his miraculous attainments (*atīśaya*) from his very birth right through the *chadmastha* state but it could not possibly be argued on that basis that he did not eat while a *chadmastha*.<sup>97</sup> The same *audārika* body which was nourished with food then must be supported in identical fashion in the *kevalin* state and since it has been established that there are perfectly legitimate reasons why the *kevalin* should eat, denial of this could only mean that a cause could not have its proper effect, a nonsensical conclusion.<sup>98</sup>



It is no argument to say that his omniscience removes the *kevalin* from the necessity of eating, because it is perfectly clear from experience that omniscience can have nothing to do with ordinary bodily activity. If it were the case that hunger increases in direct proportion to decrease in knowledge, then a child (*bāla*) would be likely to be very hungry.<sup>99</sup> The omniscience which the *kevalin* possesses is ultimately beyond the senses and cannot be regarded in the same light as hunger;<sup>100</sup> it comes about through the destruction of the harming karmas and is of no consequence for the operation of the flesh and blood *audārika* body.<sup>101</sup> Just as a lamp needs oil or a stream needs water, so the human body needs food.<sup>102</sup>

As a consequence of this insistence on the fundamental identity of the physical structure of the *chadmastha* and the *kevalin*, the Śvetāmbaras are able to reject the possibility of the indefinite existence of the *kevalin* without food which is the necessary implication of the Digambara standpoint.<sup>103</sup> Jaina tradition held that some *kevalins* had been able to live for long periods of time, from six months to a year, without food, but it is an entirely different matter to say that the *kevalin* could, because of his exalted status, exist without food for as long as he wished.<sup>104</sup> The theoretical maximum period for the duration of the *kevalin* state is conventionally described as being 'ten million *pūrva* years less a fraction' (*deśonapūrvakoṭi*),<sup>105</sup> an almost unimaginable length of time, and if there were to be just one instance of the possessor of an *audārika* body existing for such a long period without food, then the whole edifice of causality would collapse, since it is an obvious fact that food causes the continued existence of the body.<sup>106</sup> Moreover, if physical existence without food, which effectively amounts to non-death, was to be accepted as the equivalent of the *kevalin*'s other miraculous attainments, such as his purity of body, then there would be very little point in the notion of final release since he could go on in virtual perpetuity.<sup>107</sup> Scriptural references to Rṣhabha, the first *tīrthaṅkara*, existing for a year without food, in fact refer to his period as a *chadmastha* and accounts of his fasting during the *kevalin* stage obviously imply that he ate at other times.<sup>108</sup> The general enjoinder on the Jaina monk to fast on certain occasions does not mean that eating is a fault (*doṣa*), for it could equally be argued that activities such as sitting and speaking are in their turn faults because there exist particular ascetic vows which entail their temporary abandonment.<sup>109</sup> Nor need eating imply excessive contact with the objects of the senses, which is the function of *matijñāna*, an inferior kind of cognition which the *kevalin* should have transcended, for, if the *kevalin* is completely unaffected by the wonderful sights, sounds and smells which, tradition is unanimous, continually surround him, then it would be ludicrous to suppose that he could be seduced by a mere taste on the tongue.<sup>110</sup> Even in the very act of eating his omniscience is still not prejudiced, for if a *chadmastha* who has mastered clairvoyance (*avadhi*) does not suffer any impairment of his powers while taking a meal, then how could a *kevalin*?<sup>111</sup>



There are two basic factors which ensure that the *kevalin* can exist for a considerable period of time: life karma which determines the length of his life, and the intake of food; his energy, state of bliss etc. are irrelevant.<sup>112</sup> What, then, is the nature of the food that the *kevalin* takes? The Śvetāmbaras polemicists give this some consideration since there is a possible ambiguity involved, the term at issue being *āhāra*, literally 'taking to (oneself)' which can most appropriately be considered as 'nourishment'. The canon tells us that all soul 'take nourishment' (*āhāriṇah*) for they are all subject to a particular law of nature whereby material particles are attracted to the soul and transformed into nourishment in order to build up a physical body.<sup>113</sup> The Śvetāmbaras divide this matter into three types: *ojas*, the prebirth nourishment taken in the womb which moulds the *audārika* body; *loman*, matter which is taken in through the pores of the skin after the formation of the *audārika* body, and *prakṣepa*, solid food, so called because it is 'deposited' (*pra-kṣip*) in the mouth and which is the only one of the three which is visible to the ordinary human eye.<sup>114</sup> Now there are traditional statements which say that all creatures, from one-sensed up to the *kevalin*, are continually taking nourishment;<sup>115</sup> that does not mean, however, that the *kevalin* is therefore literally the same as one-sensed creatures or, alternatively, that he is continually eating, but rather that there are two processes at work, the continual influx of matter through the pores and also the intermittent taking of solid food.<sup>116</sup> The Śvetāmbaras insist that a knowledge of the conventional meaning of words must make it clear that when the term *āhāra* is used in the context of the debate about the *kevalin* eating, it must refer to *prakṣepa* nourishment and not to the matter which is attracted to the body.<sup>117</sup>

If it be accepted that it is necessary for the *kevalin* to take food, then the status of hunger (*kṣudh*, *bubhukṣā*) by which the body signals its need to eat must be assessed. The obvious point the Śvetāmbaras can make is the presence of hunger in the traditional list of afflictions to which the traditional *kevalin* is still subject.<sup>118</sup> As we have seen, these are experienced for various reasons, some occurring prior to the attainment of omniscience and disappearing when the harming karmas are destroyed, others, such as hunger, continuing during the *kevalin* state as a consequence of feeling-producing karma. But, since the Digambaras reject the Śvetāmbara canon and manipulate the sense of TS 9.11, this cannot be a compelling argument in the debate. Nonetheless, the Śvetāmbaras feel perfectly capable of demonstrating by other means that hunger is not something which militates against the *kevalin's* state of omniscience and, in particular, that it does not disturb his bliss (*sukha*). The feeling-producing karma to which the *kevalin* is still subject gives rise to a variety of sensations, both pleasant and unpleasant, such as hunger, but the experience of unpleasant feelings which continues to the end of the thirteenth stage does not mean that the *kevalin* is in a state of imperfection or unhappiness (*duḥkha*).



for the experience of pleasant feelings of necessity involves the experience of their opposite; the terms serve to define each other.<sup>119</sup> As long as the *kevalin* has feeling-producing karma, he has no control over the working of his body; but whatever he experiences has no bearing on the status of his knowledge which is beyond the categories of bodily pleasure or pain.<sup>120</sup> Nor can hunger be regarded as impossible in the *kevalin* on the grounds that it is prompted by desire which is in turn a result of delusion (*moha*)<sup>121</sup> for delusion can be dispelled by a particular sort of meditation (*bhāvanā*).<sup>122</sup> In this context the Śvetāmbaras regard meditation as the contemplation of the positive feeling which is the opposite of the negative feeling which one wishes to suppress: if one wishes to quell anger, gentleness should be contemplated.<sup>123</sup> But it is obvious that hunger cannot be suppressed in this fashion, for, while craving for food can doubtless be ended temporarily by the contemplation of fasting, hunger will return as soon as the meditation ceases.<sup>124</sup> Also, if meditation could really put an end to hunger, then the canon would not talk so much about begging for alms which takes up time which could be better spent in meditation and study.<sup>125</sup> In reality, the onset of hunger is like the onset of heat and cold, a natural event over which the *kevalin* has no influence.<sup>126</sup> It is only *desire* for the food which conquers hunger which can be regarded as delusion, but as the *kevalin* has got rid of deluding karma, he no longer experiences desire.<sup>127</sup>

The Śvetāmbara position, therefore, is that there is nothing about eating and hunger which is fundamentally at variance with the attainment of omniscience. The grounds for this are essentially two-fold.<sup>128</sup> First there are the results of direct sensory perception which tell us that all creatures with physical bodies need food to survive, there being no example of a creature in this world existing without food.<sup>129</sup> Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, there is the testimony of scriptural tradition. It is the canon which tells about karma, about the various sorts of bodies and about nourishment; there are specific references within the canon to figures like Mahāvīra eating and, significantly, there is no passage ruling out the taking of food by the *kevalin*.<sup>130</sup> This is unimpeachable evidence, for scripture has been promulgated by the omniscient ones themselves; it deals with matters ultimately beyond the senses<sup>131</sup> and any statement or description contained within it is in accordance with reality.<sup>132</sup>

Finally, it must be emphasised that the *kevalin*'s taking of food is not solely to support his body for there is a specifically soteriological reason, the *kevalin*'s continued existence serving to bring about not only his own salvation but also that of other beings in the world. *Siddhi* comes only at the last moment of the fourteenth stage of the path; by eating and thus prolonging his life, the *kevalin* can, through preaching and example, point the way to others.<sup>133</sup>

Although he was not the only Digambara to discuss the nature of the



*kevalin*, it is clear that Prabhācandra (11th century) can be regarded as the main respondent to Abhayadeva, Śākaṭyana and Śīlāṅka both because of his chronological posteriority to these writers and because, in the seventeenth century, the great Śvetāmbara, Yaśovijaya, specifically identifies Prabhācandra and his *Nyāyakumudacandra* ('The Lotus-moon of Logic'; = NKC) with the general Digambara position.<sup>134</sup> The NKC is a lengthy commentary on Akalaṅka's *Laghīyastraya* and effectively summarises the Digambara attitude to key ontological issues. Before giving an account of Prabhācandra's response, it is interesting to consider two possible objections to the Śvetāmbaras made by other Digambaras but not utilised by Prabhācandra. The first objection is specifically Digambara since it derives from the writings of Kundakunda and, in particular, his *Samayasāra*. Kundakunda is noteworthy for having evolved an approach to the description of reality very close to the notion of two levels of truth which is much better known in the context of Mādhyamika Buddhism and Advaita Vedānta. According to Kundakunda, there are two possible standpoints (*naya*) from which judgements can be made about the soul: the standpoint of determination (*nīścaya*) and the standpoint of everyday reality (*vyavahāra*). The former is concerned with the soul as ultimate reality whereas the latter is concerned with the soul's ostensible contact with that which, in reality, does not pertain to it.<sup>135</sup> So Devasena (tenth century) in his *Bhāvasaṃgraha*<sup>136</sup> (verse 113) says that, while the *kevalin* metaphorically (*uvaāreṇa*, i.e. on the level of *vyavahāra*, ordinary reality) might be said to be subject to the process of *āhāra* whereby karmic or non-karmic matter (including food) is taken into the body, on the level of true reality (*ṇicchaṇa*), he is not subject to it because he is free from passion and wholly 'other'.

The second possible objection to the Śvetāmbaras is more obvious given Jainism's strongly sympathetic attitude towards all forms of life in the world. Since even plants have souls and are composed of conglomerations of life forms (*nigoda*), Vāmadeva (fourteenth century) points out that for the *kevalin* to take alms, even in vegetarian form, must involve 'intention to harm' (*hiṃsā*) for somebody.<sup>137</sup> Even though monastic law, which deals with giving and receiving alms, makes clear that the monk's attitude to the preparation of food is neutral, it might still seem highly improbable that the *kevalin* should be implicated in any way in the destruction of life. That Prabhācandra uses neither of these arguments of Devasena and Vāmadeva presumably suggests that he felt able to confute the Śvetāmbaras by showing the obvious inconsistencies of the points they themselves made.

Prabhācandra starts by trying to establish exactly what is meant by the term 'nourishment' (*āhāra*). The traditional Digambara analysis of this is both more elaborate than the Śvetāmbara version and also has different nomenclature: the solid food which the Śvetāmbara call 'deposit nourishment'



(*prakṣepāhāra*) is termed by the Digambaras 'morsel, mouthful nourishment' (*kavalāhāra*), perhaps reflecting the more austere form of eating of the Digambara ascetic.<sup>138</sup> Prabhācandra affirms the point made by the Śvetāmbaras that *āhāra* means the matter which the laws of nature dictate is attracted to the body. However, this cannot mean that the *kevalin* specifically takes morsel nourishment when he is described as 'taking nourishment', for this would mean designating as not 'taking nourishment' one-sensed creatures (that is, plants), egg-born creatures (that is, when actually in the egg) and the gods, none of whom, according to Digambara analysis, take morsel nourishment, as well as those animals and men who do not happen to be eating at a particular time. Particularly significant is the example of the gods, for, although they are subject to feeling-producing karma and thus might be expected, in Śvetāmbara terms, to experience hunger, they do not take solid, morsel food. This is high praise indeed of the *kevalin*, says Prabhācandra mockingly, when feeling-producing karma does not cause the gods to eat whereas it does for the *kevalin* who is far superior to the gods.<sup>139</sup> This is a rather inauspicious start to Prabhācandra's argument since he has not in any way refuted the Śvetāmbara point that the meaning of *āhāra* is perfectly clear from the context in which it is used.

Prabhācandra then goes on to ask what could be the factors which determine that the *kevalin* does eat. Since the Śvetāmbaras place great weight upon the authoritative means of knowledge by which they reach their conclusions, the Digambara, by adducing the Śvetāmbara belief that the *kevalin*'s eating and evacuation of food are invisible, is able to turn the tables on his opponents' view that direct perception and the Śvetāmbara canon enable us to make a correct judgement in this matter, for if we understand directly through our senses that the *kevalin* eats, then that contradicts the canonical position that he has transcended the senses; alternatively, if it were said that our understanding comes through extrasensory means, then the holder of such a stupid view would have to be subjected to trial by ordeal.<sup>140</sup> If, however, we infer that the *kevalin* eats, then what is the premise (*liṅga*) on which such an inference is based? It cannot be feeling-producing karma because this has already been ruled out by reference to the gods, nor can it be mortality because the *kevalin* has transcended this state, a judgement which is very revealing of the Digambara position. This last point is reinforced by the fact that the *kevalin* does not possess a normal *audārika* body of flesh and blood, as the Śvetāmbaras argue, but a 'supreme' (*parama*) *audārika* body 'which is like pure crystal, the embodiment of lustre and without the seven constituents of the human body'. Such a body, completely different from the bodies of normal creatures, cannot be said to require food for its support, when inferior beings like the gods can survive without eating.<sup>141</sup> In the *kevalin* state, absence of eating is no more noteworthy than absence of growth of hair.<sup>142</sup>



Since the *kevalin* has great ascetic power, there is no contradiction in his existing without eating, just as there is no contradiction in him facing in all geographical directions simultaneously (*caturāśya*) and other such miraculous attainments. Evidence for this can be found both in ordinary life where it is obvious that there is no difference in bodily condition between someone who eats on five occasions and someone engaged in meditation who eats a lesser number of times, or between someone who eats every day and somebody who omits to eat for several days, and also in traditional lore which asserts that the *kevalin* Bāhubali maintained excellent physical condition without eating for a year. In fact, the main determining factor for the existence of the body is life-karma and life-karma alone; food, if taken, is merely a subsidiary factor even during the *chadmastha* period. As Akalanika had already pointed out, matter perpetually flows into the *kevalin's* body to ensure that it does not diminish in size and therefore there is no way of proving that the *kevalin* cannot exist for vast periods of time without eating.<sup>143</sup>

Prabhācandra then returns to feeling-producing karma and reiterates the early Digambara assertion that it would be incapable of independently giving rise to any unpleasant experience such as hunger unless it were accompanied by deluding karma. He gives two similes to illustrate this. Just as when the general of an army falls in battle and his army as a consequence has no power, so in the same way, when the deluding karma is destroyed, the non-harming karmas, such as feeling-producing, lose their efficacy. Again, here echoing Akalanika's simile in his commentary on TS 9.11, just as when poison is rendered harmless by a doctor and has no effect, so feeling-producing karma cannot bring about an effect when deluding karma has been destroyed by the fire of intense meditation (*śukladhyāna*). The *kevalin* cannot experience hunger because there is no delusion (*moha*) in him which might serve as its cause, and without a cause there can be no effect.<sup>144</sup> If the karma were to bring about an effect irrespective of the spiritual status of the person being affected, then all sorts of disagreeable things, sexual temptation and so on, would come about for the person on the religious path; as the mind would be disturbed, meditation could not be performed and so the important transition through the eighth, ninth and tenth stages (*kṣapakaśreṇī*) could not be made in order to bring about the destruction of delusion. But, in reality things of an impure nature do not afflict the *kevalin* who is subject only to the pure. The *kevalin* is like a powerful king who has just captured a neighbouring country: the wicked inhabitants who still survive cannot go on performing wicked actions while the good inhabitants continue to perform their activities without hindrance. The *kevalin* destroys impure things and preserves pure things, as the king punishes the guilty but not the innocent.<sup>145</sup>

Hunger, as its name suggests, involves desire (Prabhācandra uses the desiderative noun from *bhuj*, *bubhukṣā*) and as such is no different from the



desire for sexual relations. Contrary to the Śvetāmbara viewpoint, it must disappear when its opposite is meditated upon; just as lust for women disappears when one emerges from meditation, so does hunger. Once again, lack of delusion can be seen as the crucial factor: hunger and lack of delusion in the same person are as impossible as heat and cold together.<sup>146</sup> Even if it be allowed that hunger does not involve desire, it still involves unhappiness or discomfort (*duḥkha*) which is impossible in the *kevalin* who is characterised by infinite bliss (*anantasukha*); bliss and unhappiness cannot co-exist, for the former dispels the latter as fire does cold.<sup>147</sup> Śākaṭyāna's assertion that the Digambara position entails a situation wherein a person of little knowledge such as a child would be very hungry and vice versa is futile because knowledge characterised by bliss is something only the *kevalin* can have.<sup>148</sup> There is no point in the Śvetāmbaras maintaining that omniscience is not at variance with hunger because it is ultimately beyond the senses, since it would therefore be impossible to say anything sensible about it or understand how it is capable of witnessing anything. The *kevalin* does not experience hunger precisely because he is omniscient; his powers would lose their efficacy were he to need food, just as ordinary people experience a diminution of their physical powers when affected by hunger.<sup>149</sup>

Prabhācandra then attempts to refute other Śvetāmbara contentions. The eleven *parīśahas* which the Śvetāmbaras claim afflict the *kevalin* because of his feeling-producing karma can be rejected on etymological grounds, and also because the *kevalin* would have to fall prey to illness; but gods have feeling-producing karma and do not fall ill.<sup>150</sup> The Śvetāmbara assertion that, if eating were to be regarded as a fault (*doṣa*), then so should activities like speaking be incorrect for two reasons: the *kevalin*'s obligation to speak is a result of name-karma, and speech, unlike hunger, is not found in the traditional list of eighteen faults.<sup>151</sup> It is wrong to compare the operation of clairvoyance (*avadhi*) with omniscience, for while clairvoyance may function perfectly well when applied to external objects which are its proper sphere, there arises interference when it is applied at the same time as eating; this is completely different from *kevala* knowledge which functions without any interruption.<sup>152</sup> Finally, the Śvetāmbara assertion that *matijñāna*, the inferior kind of knowledge, would not arise in the *kevalin* even though he were to have contact with the objects of the senses is inappropriate, for if the relationship between object and perceiver does not give rise to *matijñāna*, then the sphere of operation of that form of knowledge is completely removed.<sup>153</sup>

According to the Digambara, then, there is no reason why the *kevalin* should eat. He does not need to increase his size because this occurs through the continual influx of matter. He certainly does not eat to maintain his knowledge because he has destroyed the harming karma which veils knowledge (*jñān-āvaraṇīya*). He does not need to put an end to the pangs of hunger because a



being of infinite bliss and energy does not experience such discomfort, nor is he attempting to avoid accidental or premature death (*apavartanā*), for a being in his last existence cannot fall victim to that. The excuse that eating enables the *kevalin* to point out the way to liberation to others is totally improbable because the *kevalin* with his infinite energy is quite capable of doing this without eating.<sup>154</sup>

It is in the last portion of his account that Prabhācandra makes his most telling points. As we have already seen, the traditional Śvetāmbara list of the miraculous attainments of the *kevalin* includes the fact that he eats and excretes food unseen by human eye. That none of the Śvetāmbara polemicists mention this suggests that it may have been a cause of some difficulty to them in the debate and certainly Prabhācandra is well able to demonstrate the ludicrous inconsistency of this situation. The conventionalised surroundings in which the *tīrthaṅkara* (and it is this figure and not the ordinary *kevalin*, that Prabhācandra would appear to be now talking about) promulgates the law is called the *samavasaraṇa*, an assembly of divine beings, humans and animals who have come together to hear the *tīrthaṅkara* preach and where a temple (*devacchandaka*) has been magically created to which, according to the Svetāmbaras, the *tīrthaṅkara* can withdraw and stay at his leisure (*yathāsukham āste*). But what possible reason, asks Prabhācandra, does he have for retiring there? He does not need peace and quiet to facilitate meditation because he does not have normal mental faculties which could be disturbed; besides, a *tīrthaṅkara* can only metaphorically be said to meditate. It simply makes no sense to describe a being of infinite bliss and energy taking his ease.<sup>155</sup>

The supposition must therefore be that the *tīrthaṅkara* withdraws for some secret purpose. Assuming for the sake of argument that he might be going off to a solitary place to consume food outwith the sight of human eye, Prabhācandra mockingly asks whether he is afraid of being seen or whether he is leaving behind his hungry pupils and, despite his great compassion, slinking off to eat on his own. It might as well be maintained that he consorts with women as to suggest that he behaves in this way.<sup>156</sup>

An alternative hypothesis might be that his solitary sojourn in the temple is for the purpose of destroying karma. However, the *tīrthaṅkara* has already destroyed the harming karmas and will easily put an end to the non-harming karmas at the appropriate moment through the fire of 'pure meditation' (*śukladhyāna*) which characterises *kevalins*. If this were not so, then it would mean that the continuing process of the cultivation of pure meditation would manifest itself in one form in private in the temple and in another form openly in the assembly. Prabhācandra then combines these two unlikely possibilities and asks how the *tīrthaṅkara* could destroy the karma which of necessity would accrue at the time of eating. Confession (*pratikramaṇa*) is the normal way of



doing this, yet confession is for those who have committed faults, a category in which the *tīrthaṅkara* cannot be included.<sup>157</sup>

In a final burst of sarcasm, Prabhācandra asks how the *tīrthaṅkara* could become invisible to even his closest disciples at the time of eating since his body continually blazes forth with light. If he is concealed by some kind of screen then it would be difficult to give alms to him at all, and if his invisibility comes about through some kind of magic spell, then he is a wizard (*vidyādhara*) and not an ascetic. The Digambara position, in short, is that the *kevalin's* position is one of infinite bliss, and hunger is at odds with this.<sup>158</sup>

Although other Jaina writers engaged in debate about the *kevalin*, it was Abhayadeva, Śākaṭāyana, Śīlāṅka and Prabhācandra who established the main terms of reference of the controversy. We have already seen that Vādidevasūri employed traditional Śvetāmbara arguments in his disputation with the Digambara Kumudacandra and an examination of his *Syādvādaratnākara*<sup>159</sup> highlights this, for in this work which is, somewhat ironically, indebted to Prabhācandra,<sup>160</sup> he merely reiterates the points made by his distinguished predecessors, often scarcely deviating from their actual language, and adds nothing new to the Śvetāmbara approach to the *kevalin*. Digambara writers such as Jayasena (12th century), the commentator on Kundakunda's *Pravacanasāra*, and Vāmadeva (14th century) echo the arguments and spirit of Akalaṅka and Prabhācandra.

The last noteworthy writer to participate in the debate was the Śvetāmbara, Yaśovijaya, one of the most illustrious members of the Tapā Gaccha.<sup>161</sup> Although he is usually depicted as a reformer and standardiser of Jaina practice, his *Ādhyātmikamatakhṇḍana*<sup>162</sup> ('The Destruction of Digambara Doctrine') is, as its title suggests, neither eirenic nor conciliatory towards his opponents. In this often fiercely polemical work, in which Prabhācandra is singled out for specific abuse, Yaśovijaya deploys a broad range of reference to Jaina literature and also utilises a highly sophisticated logical technique to reinforce the standard Śvetāmbara position and to attack some aspects of the Digambara argument not dealt with by the earlier writers. He is particularly scathing towards the idea that the *kevalin* might possess a special kind of body, a *paramaudārika* body, which lacks the fundamental physical constituents (*dhātu*). It is nonsensical, Yaśovijaya asserts, to maintain that a body with such a tough physical structure as the *kevalin's* should not have the fundamental constituents, for the very idea of an *audārika* body of any sort would be undermined if it did not have bones, sinews and so on. If it were to be denied that the *kevalin* has blood, then belief in his miraculous attributes (*atīśaya*), valid by and large for both sects, would have to be abandoned, for it is supposedly one of the main characteristics of the *kevalin* that his blood is as white as milk. Alternatively, if the Digambaras were to argue that the fundamental constituents gradually disappear as the individual progresses



through the stages of spiritual development, then this would entail the impossible situation of the body altering its basic structure as each new stage is reached.<sup>163</sup>

For Yaśovijaya, Śivabhūti, the putative founder of the Digambara sect, can hardly be considered a Jaina at all. The aim of the Digambaras in saying that the *kevalin* doesn't eat is to mislead the world and, as they are in the grip of 'deluding karma which arises from false doctrine' (*mithyātvamohanīya*), they are to be avoided at all costs.<sup>164</sup>

It is somewhat startling to read such virulent denunciation of one Jaina sect by a member of another, even if it be partly rhetorical, and one must conclude that the embattled situation in which Jainism no doubt found itself in the seventeenth century, with numbers shrinking under Hindu and Moslem pressure, must have induced Yaśovijaya to resort to harsh language in an attempt to impose doctrinal unity. Unfortunately for him, this was hardly a debate which could be 'won' by either side, Vāḍidevasūri's victory over Kumudacandra in 1125 AD probably representing not so much the triumph of one set of doctrinal beliefs over another but more likely the confirmation of the geographical boundaries of sectarian spheres of influence, Śvetāmbara in Gujarat and Digambara in the south. A comment by the twelfth century Digambara, Jayasena, is particularly revealing in this aspect. There is, he says, no point in asserting that the *kevalin* eats food on the basis of observation of the behaviour of ordinary people in the world today, since there have been no *kevalins* since Jambū whose behaviour we could observe. We would be forced to deny the omniscience of the *kevalin* because we do not currently find anybody with comparable attainments and the prowess of the legendary heroes, Rāma and Rāvaṇa, would also have to be rejected because we do not see their like today.<sup>165</sup> In fact, a consideration of our polemicists' statements suggests that neither of the competing viewpoints was really susceptible to disproof by logical means and that the weight of the respective traditions built up over the centuries, with their differing emphases and interpretations of aspects of the common Jaina tradition, produced two different and incontrovertible pictures of the *kevalin*.

As far as the debate is concerned, the Śvetāmbaras seem to view the *kevalin* as essentially human, but a human of a highly developed type who is at the same time still subject to mortal frailties: in the words of Abhayadeva, 'There is no time until his final release when he does not have vexations (*kleśa*)'.<sup>166</sup> For the Digambaras, on the other hand, he is much more than human and to all intents and purposes approaches divinity, a view expressed in Samantabhadra's *Bṛhatsvayambhūstotra* which Prabhācandra quotes with approval: 'He (i.e. the *kevalin* qua *īrthanāra*) has gone beyond mortal nature and is a divinity among divinities.'<sup>167</sup>

As my purpose in this paper has been the delineation of the terms of



reference of this old debate, my concluding remarks will be general and tentative. If we can assume, as I have already suggested, that the sectarian polemicists, in discussing the *kevalin*, are effectively referring to the *tīrthaṅkara*, then it must necessarily be asked whether the differing judgements about his need to eat have any implications for the attitudes of contemporary Jaina devotees (for it is the *tīrthaṅkaras* who are the objects of worship and not the *siddhas*, the liberated souls who are the members of a much larger category). The most tangible manifestation of these differing conceptions is the offerings placed in front of images of the *tīrthaṅkaras*: edible things such as fruit and nuts by the Śvetāmbaras and inedible things such as flowers by the Digambaras, although they do not seem totally consistent in this.<sup>168</sup> Śvetāmbara ritual thus confirms Abhayadeva, Śīlāṅka and the rest. But how 'human' does this make the Śvetāmbara *tīrthaṅkara*, for if he eats, which is a basic human function, he does not sleep, another equally basic human function, as the *Bhagavāṣutta* makes clear.<sup>169</sup>

In fact it is not only the Digambaras who describe the *tīrthaṅkara* as a god but also the Śvetāmbaras. The description 'god' (*deva*) is analysed in the *Bhagavāṣutta* 12.9<sup>170</sup> where it is stated that it can be used not only of those beings who live in heaven while still being subject to the process of rebirth but also of *kevalins* and even ordinary monks; divinity in these terms signifies status alone and does not entail any ability or desire to influence human events and destinies. The distinguished Digambara layman and scholar, A.N. Upadhye, used the expression 'divinity' in the title of a short essay about the *tīrthaṅkara* which could scarcely be bettered as a general statement about Jaina worship and belief.<sup>171</sup> Upadhye asserts confidently that no Jaina believes that one worships a *tīrthaṅkara* in order to ensure some reward or blessing; participation in ritual serves merely to concentrate the mind, the objects of devotion being examples to be emulated by the worshipper.

Upadhye gives the standard intellectual account of the religion: as such it is worthy of respect and would no doubt be echoed by many members of the community, irrespective of sect. Yet it has not passed unnoticed that many Jains do in fact act towards the *tīrthaṅkara* in a manner which suggests that they expect some form of reward for their worship, if only in the form of grace,<sup>172</sup> and the non-Jaina is entitled to wonder whether Upadhye's all-encompassing statement about the nature of Jaina belief is valid for all members of all sects on every occasion. Unfortunately, it is here that the lack of competent field-studies is most to be regretted and we must be highly cautious about any judgements we make. It is, however, tempting to seek a possible analogy with Sinhalese Buddhism, an area in which field-studies abound and which, from the point of view of the situation just described, has many similarities with Jainism. Like Mahāvīra and the other *tīrthaṅkaras*, the Buddha is essentially a dead renouncer who has achieved *nirvāṇa* and is



therefore outwith *saṃsāric* affairs. Despite this, many Buddhists perform rituals which seem to suggest that he is more than this. In Gombrich's opinion, there are two levels of belief at work here. For the villagers whom he studied, the Buddha was 'cognitively' dead and unable to exert influence, in other words, this is what the villagers firmly stated to be the case. On the 'affective' level, however, the Buddha is alive and capable of granting boons; the villagers manifested this attitude by their behaviour in worship.<sup>173</sup> This analysis has been criticised by Southwold on the grounds that behaviour is never a sufficient basis for deducing belief.<sup>174</sup> His fieldwork shows that Sinhalese Buddhists consistently hold that the Buddha is defunct and as a consequence, totally unable to influence human affairs. When some worldly favour is required, then worship is directed towards the intermediate figures of the Sinhalese pantheon (similar deities exist in Jainism);<sup>175</sup> true religion, which has more serious goals, is in the mind.

The whole notion of belief is, of course, notoriously difficult. If we do not take seriously what an informant specifically tells us to be the case, then our ability to make valid statements about anything is likely to be seriously hindered, but, at the same time, we should beware of overemphasising the validity of statements such as Upadhye's and giving total credence to them, for all utterances about belief function in a wider network of other unexpressed utterances and beliefs.<sup>176</sup> Upadhye's statement about Jaina belief is in these terms not worthless but must inevitably be subject to qualification: the context in which statements about worship are uttered is not the same context in which worship is performed.

In a recent book<sup>177</sup> Southwold has subjected the idea that belief has primacy in religion to a rigorous critique and demonstrates that it is a legacy of the Christian world-view (perhaps ultimately going back to the Greeks) to maintain that matters of religious truth can only be expressed in belief-avowals.<sup>178</sup> Similarly, it is a legacy of the fact that westerners have been reared and conditioned in a theistic culture (or at least one which generally speaks about religion in theistic terms) which leads them to judge the Buddha and, by extension, the Jaina *tīrthaṅkara*, in theistic terms.<sup>179</sup> I do not wish to take issue with Southwold's subtle and, above all, humane study which provides a highly attractive model for the study of religions, but it is not mere theistic bias which finally leads me to question Jainism's credentials as a totally atheistic religion. The early texts may indeed advise the Jaina that there is no being worthy of worship, but it does seem highly likely that the centuries of influence which an increasingly predominant Hinduism exerted upon Jainism reshaped many of the characteristics of Jaina religious behaviour. In the words of P.S. Jaini, 'The wave of the *bhakti* movement that had swept over the whole range of Indian life finally overtook the atheist Jainas and forced them to deify, as it were, their human *tīrthaṅkaras* or face the peril of extinction. Probably this move brought



to the surface the emotional hunger of the Jaina laity for an object of worship more gracious or glamorous than merely the austere figure of an exalted human teacher.<sup>180</sup> The Digambara Jinasena's *Ādipurāṇa* (9th century) shows a clear desire to assimilate the *tīrthaṅkara* (in this case Rṣabha) and the Hindu gods and leaves no room for doubt that devotion directed towards him will bring about the desired rewards.<sup>181</sup> Although these rewards arguably involve the internal, spiritual transformation of the devotee, Jinasena unmistakably conveys that the *tīrthaṅkara* is capable of bestowing grace.

The time is surely ripe to consider some vital questions about the Jaina religion: contemporary sectarian attitudes towards the *tīrthaṅkara*, the role of the deities of the Jaina pantheon in worship, the possibility of regional as well as sectarian variations in ritual and so on. Jinasena jeered that anybody who tried to demonstrate that the *kevalin* takes food was suffering from a disease brought about by delusion and would need a strong dose of ancient ghee to remedy it.<sup>182</sup> It is to be hoped that Western students of South Asian religion can find a more palatable means of dispelling the deluding karma which has prevented them from giving Jainism the attention it deserves.

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## NOTES

- 1 R. Williams, *Jaina Yoga: a survey of the medieval śrāvakācāras*, London 1963. The University of California's publication in 1979 of P. S. Jaini's *The Jaina Path of Purification* is greatly to be welcomed.
- 2 See, for example, A. L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, London 1971, p. 295.
- 3 Published by the Oxford University Press 1915; reprinted in Delhi 1970.
- 4 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, London 1973, p. 398. Happily, the situation seems to be changing. Caroline Humphrey of the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge, UK, is studying image installation in Jaina temples; two postgraduate students working under Dr Humphrey's direction, Josephine Reynell and Marcus Banks, are studying respectively Jaina women in Jaipur and the Jaina communities in Jamnagar and Leicester; Michael Carrithers, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Durham, UK, is studying the Jaina community in Kolhapur and Thomas McCormick, Department of History, University of Michigan, USA is completing a doctoral dissertation on lay-monastic relations in Gujarat.
- 5 See Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, Delhi, 1980, pp. 79–80.
- 6 For this characterisation of southern religion see Friedhelm Hardy, *Virahabhakti: The Early History of Kṛṣṇa Devotion in South India*, Oxford 1982, p. 169.



- 7 Stein *op. cit.* See also Burton Stein, All the King's Mana: Perspectives on Kingship in Medieval South India, in J. F. Richards (ed.) *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, Madison 1981 (second edition), pp. 115–67, which is fundamental for assessing the ideological role of Jainism in South India.
- 8 See Kṣamāśramaṇa Jinabhadra Ganin's *Nihnavavāda* with Hemacandra Maladhārin's commentary, ed. Muni Ratnaprabhavijaya, Ahmedabad 1947. Some versions know of seven schisms only and it is conceivable that the account of the eighth is an interpolation. See Suzuko Ohira, *A Study of Tattvārthasūtra with Bhāṣya with special reference to authorship and date*, L. D. Series 86, Ahmedabad 1982, p. 129. Still basic for the schisms remains Ernst Leumann, Die alten Berichte von dem Schismen der Jaina, *Indische Studien*, 17, 1883, pp. 91–135.
- 9 The importance of this tenet can be judged from its occurrence at the beginning of the vast fifth *aṅga* of the canon, the *Bhagavaīsutta*. (For convenience I will quote from the Sthānakvāsi edition of the canon, *Suttāgame* (SĀ), in two volumes by Pupphabhikkhū, Gurgaon 1953, 1954.) *Bhagavaīsutta* 1.1 = SĀ I p. 384 line 23 – p. 385 line 8. See also Jozef Deleu, *Viyāhapannatti (Bhagavaī): The Fifth Aṅga of the Jaina Canon: Introduction, Critical Analysis, Commentary and Notes*, Brugge 1970, p. 73.
- 10 *Yogaśāstra* 2.3.3 prathamam vibhāgaḥ, ed. Muni Jambūvijaya, Bombay 1977, p. 165.
- 11 The other category is the *sthavirakalpa* according to which the monk wears a robe and lives in a monastic community.
- 12 See Buddha Prakash, The Genesis of the Digambara-Śvetāmbara Split, in A. N. Upadhye *et al.* (eds) *Mahāvīra and his Teachings* Bombay 1977, p. 272 (pp. 271–285).
- 13 Jaini, *Path*, p. 51.
- 14 For observations on the sense of the term 'canon' see Klaus Bruhn, Āvaśyaka Studies I, in Klaus Bruhn and Albrecht Wezler (eds). *Studien zum Jainismus und Buddhismus: Gedenkschrift für Ludwig Alsdorf*, Wiesbaden 1981, p. 12 (pp. 11–49).
- 15 Jaini, *Path*, p. 14.
- 16 The assumption must be that by this time the white robed monks were in a numerical ascendancy in the west. See Ohira *op. cit.*, pp. 126–34. It is clear from the metrical and linguistic evidence that the canon underwent a long period of evolution. For an example justifying Digambara suspicions about Śvetāmbara texts, see Ludwig Alsdorf, Further Contributions to the History of Jaina Cosmography, *New Indian Antiquary*, 9, 1947, pp. 112–113 (pp. 105–128) = *Kleine Schriften*, Wiesbaden 1974, pp. 143–144 (pp. 136–159) and for the editorial processes at work in one text, see Colette Caillat, Notes sur les variantes dans la tradition du Dasaveyāliya-sutta, *Indologica Taurinensia*, 89, 1981–2, pp. 71–83.
- 17 See K. K. Dixit, *Jaina Ontology*, Ahmedabad 1971, p. 158.
- 18 ed. Muni Jinavijaya, Singhi Jain Series, Volume 11, Bombay 1949, p. 106.
- 19 The type of whisk carried by a Digambara monk was as important an element of orthopraxy as nakedness. Kumārasena, the founder of the Kāsthā Saṅgha, was expelled from the Mūla Saṅgha for attempting to change the peacock-feather whisk to one made out of cow's tail. See Ram Bhushan Prasad Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*, Delhi 1975, p. 127.
- 20 Jeremiah Losty. *The Art of the Book in India*, London, 1982, p. 22.



- 21 ed. Muni Jinavijaya, Singhi Jaini Series Vol. 13, Bombay 1960: *Vāḍidevasūri-carita*, pp. 171–182.
- 22 Translated by C. H. Tawney, *The Prabandhacintāmaṇi or Wishing-stone of Narratives*, Calcutta 1901: the debate is described on pp. 97–104. Yaśaścandra's dramatised version, *Mudritakumudacandra*, adds nothing of value.
- 23 Tawney, p. 98.
- 24 *Ibid.* p. 104.
- 25 Verses 218–227. The question of women's ability to reach *nirvāṇa* is essentially a by-product of the sectarian attitude to the wearing of clothes by renouncers.
- 26 For the various unpleasant experiences which the Buddha underwent, see Étienne Lamotte, *L'Enseignement de Vimalakīrti*, Louvain, 1962, pp. 416–420.
- 27 For a representative cross-section, see Jinendra Varṇī, *Jainendra Siddhānta Kośa*, (= JSK) four volumes, Delhi 1970–73, volume two, pp. 155–169; and Balchandra Siddhāntashāstri, *Jainalakṣaṇāvalī*, volume two, Delhi 1973, p. 373.
- 28 Umāsvāti, *Tattvārthasūtra* 1.30. See Pt. Sukhlalji's *Commentary on Tattvārtha Sūtra of Vācaka Umāsvāti*, L. D. Series 44, Ahmedabad 1974, pp. 48–51 and P. S. Jaini. On the Sarvajñatva (Omniscience) of Mahāvīra and the Buddha, in L. Cousins et al. (eds), *Buddhist Studies in Honour of I. B. Horner*, Dordrecht 1974, pp. 71–90.
- 29 Ramjee Singh, *The Jaina Concept of Omniscience*, Ahmedabad 1974, p. 225.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p. 51 and Jaini, *Path*, p. 33.
- 31 *Bhagavaīsutta* 20.8 (SĀ I, p. 805 lines 6–7); Deleu, *Vijāhapaṇnatti*, p. 257.
- 32 See Charlotte Krause, *Ancient Jaina Hymns*, Ujjain 1952, p. 19. For the Buddhist distinction between the Buddha and the Arhat on the grounds of the former's priority, see Nathan Katz, *Buddhist Images of Human Perfection*, Delhi 1982, pp. 96–97.
- 33 The standard Digambara account of Bāhubali occurs in Jinasena's *Ādipurāṇa*, ed. Pannālāl Jain, Kāshī, 1964, 1965, parvan thirty-six.
- 34 Jaina tradition is unambiguous on this point. See Hemacandra, *The Lives of the Sixty-three Illustrious Persons*, translated by Helen M. Johnson, volume six, Gaekwad's Oriental Series, Baroda 1962, p. 348, and *Ādipurāṇa* 2.138; also Walter Schubring, *Die Lehre der Jainas*, Leipzig 1935, p. 199. Compare Theravāda Buddhism which is vague about the possibility of the attainment of *nirvāṇa* after the Buddha. See Martin Southwold, True Buddhism and Village Buddhism in Sri Lanka, in J. Davis (ed.), *Religious Organisation and Religious Experience*, Association of Social Anthropologists, Monograph Twenty-two, London 1982, p. 146 (pp. 137–152).
- 35 However Śākaṭāyana, *Kevalibhuktiprakaraṇa* (see footnote 72) kārikā 28, commentary, makes a distinction between *tīrthānkaras* and other *kevalins*. Prabhācandra (footnote 133) mentions Bāhubali.
- 36 SĀ I, pp. 118–119; translated by Hermann Jacobi, *Jaina Sutras*, part two, Sacred Books of the East, volume 45, Oxford 1895, pp. 287–292.
- 37 SĀ I, pp. 118 lines 13 to 14.
- 38 *Ibid.*, lines 15 to 17.
- 39 *Ibid.*, lines 19 to 21.
- 40 SĀ I, p. 118 line 22 to p. 119 line 2.
- 41 SĀ I p. 119 lines 7 to 8.
- 42 *Ibid.*, lines 21 to 22.
- 43 *Ibid.*, lines 24 to 25.
- 44 *Ibid.*, lines 26 to 27. (Eating at night involves the possible unwitting destruction of lifeforms.)



- 45 *SĀ I*, pp. 708–739; Deleu, *Viyāhāpannatti*, pp. 214–220.
- 46 *Ibid.*, p. 730 line 18 to p. 732 bottom.
- 47 *SĀ* bowdlerises the text by inserting words for fruit. See also Jaini, *Path*, pp. 23–24 and, most recently, Nalini Balbir, *Dānāṣṭakakathā: Recueil Jaina de Huit Histoires sur le Don*, Publications de l'Institut de Civilisation Indienne 48, Paris 1982, p. 196.
- 48 *Bhagavaṇsutta* 2.1 (*SĀ I* p. 419 line 25 – p. 420 line 2). *SĀ* is hesitant about the correct form, having *viyāṭṭabhoiassa* in lines 26 and 29. See also K. C. Lalwani, *Sudharma Svāmī's Bhagavatisūtra*, volume 1 (śatakas 1–2), Calcutta 1973, p. 159.
- 49 The *Kalpasūtra* translated by Hermann Jacobi, *Jaina Sūtras*, Part One, *Sacred Books of the East*, volume 22, Oxford 1884, p. 283.
- 50 Kundakunda, *Samayasāra*, translated by Rai Bahadur J. L. Jaini, *The Sacred Books of the Jains*, volume 8, Lucknow 1930, p. 130.
- 51 Kundakunda, *Pravacanasāra*, ed. A. N. Upadhye, Bombay 1935, p. 27.
- 52 Quoted by JSK, volume 2, p. 159.
- 53 See Ohira *op. cit.*
- 54 *SĀ I*, pp. 29–32; Jacobi, *Jaina Sūtras*, Part One, pp. 79–87.
- 55 *Bhagavaṇsutta* 8.8 (*SĀ I*, p. 558 lines 23 – p. 559 line 24); Deleu, *Viyāhāpannatti*, pp. 152–3. See also *Uttarajjhāyanaṣutta* Chapter two (*SĀ II*, pp. 979–981); Jacobi, *Jaina Sūtras*, part two, pp. 8–15.
- 56 See Sukhlalji *op. cit.*, p. 333.
- 57 See TS 8.5–14. See also the descriptions of Nathmal Tatia, *Studies in Jaina Philosophy*, Varanasi 1951, pp. 232–233 and Jaini, *Path*, pp. 131–133. The form (a)ghātiyā is semi-Prakritised based on *ghātikā*. Also used is (a)ghātin.
- 58 For the difference between *jñāna* and *darśana*, see Ramjee Singh *op. cit.*, pp. 61–67.
- 59 According to TS 10.5 it is only final release which involves destruction of all karma.
- 60 Akalaṅka, *Tattvārthavārttika (Rājavārttika)*, two volumes, ed. Mahendra Kumar, Benares 1953, 1957, pp. 613–614. For Pūjyapāda, see Ohira *op. cit.*, pp. 21–23.
- 61 For the four infinite qualities of the *kevalin* viz. insight, knowledge, bliss and energy, see JSK, volume 1, p. 141.
- 62 For auspicious (*sūbha*) karma, see TS 8.26.
- 63 One of the oldest Digambara texts, Vaṭṭakera's *Mulācāra*, states (5.58) that there are two types of aversion (*vidiginchā*): one is directed towards material (*darva*) things such as excrement while the other is directed towards spiritual or psychological (*bhāva*) things such as the afflictions. The Digambaras add two more *pariśahas* to the Svetāmbara list: disaffection with monastic life (*aradi*) and liking for worldly life (*radi*). See Kiyoaki Okuda, *Eine Digambara-Dogmatik: das fünfte Kapitel von Vaṭṭakera's Mulācāra*, Wiesbaden 1975, pp. 49–50 and pp. 108–109. It is the Digambara contention that it is only the ordinary monk who is afflicted by the *pariśahas*. For *dravya* and *bhāva* see Ludwig Alsdorf, Niksepa – a Jaina Contribution to Scholastic Methodology, *Journal of the Oriental Institute Baroda* 22, 1973, p. 456 (pp. 455–463) = *Kleine Schriften*, p. 258 (pp. 257–265).
- 64 *Tattvārthavārttika*. Volume one, p. 105 lines 30 to 33.
- 65 See Sukhlalji *op. cit.*, p. 312.
- 66 The influential Digambara work, the *Dhavalā*, (quoted by JSK volume two, p. 158) states that feeling-producing karma is without power over the *kevalin*, while the *Gommaṣasāra: Karmakāṇḍa*, ed. Rai Bahadur J. L. Jaini, *Sacred Books*



- of the Jains, volume 6, Lahore 1927, p. 12, states that feeling-producing karma does not operate without deluding karma. *Bhagavaīsutta* 8.10 (SĀ I, p. 573 line 3 – p. 574 line 6; Deleu, *Vivāhapaṇṇatti*, p. 158) discusses the various combinations of types of karma and states that deluding karma may or may not occur in conjunction with feeling-producing karma but says nothing of any possible lack of efficacy of the latter.
- 67 Siddhasena Divākara, *Sanmatitarkaprakaraṇa* with the commentary of Abhayadevasūri, part four, ed. Sukhlāl Sanghāvi and Becardās Doṣī, Ahmedabad, Saṃvat 1985, pp. 610–615. For Abhayadeva's date see Jaini, *Path*, p. 85.
- 68 There was general agreement amongst Jains that consciousness was composed of knowledge (*jñāna*) and insight (*darśana*). However, it was not clear how these operated in the context of *kevala* knowledge i.e. do they occur in sequence or in tandem or is there no difference between them at all inasmuch as they occur simultaneously? Siddhasena Divākara argues for the last view and it is while discussing the possible validity of sequential consciousness that Abhayadeva deals with the nature of the *kevalin*. See Ramjee Singh *op. cit.*, pp. 61–67.
- 69 For SNT I have used the reprint of the Āgamodayasamiti edition *Ācārāṅgśūtram and Sūtrakṛtāṅgasūtram with the Nirukti of Ācārya Bhadrabāhu Svāmī and with the commentary of Śīlāṅkacārya*, originally edited by Śāgarānanda Sūri and re-edited by Muni Jambūvijaya, Lālā Sundarlāl Jaina Āgamagranthamālā, volume one, Delhi 1978, pp. 228–231. For Śīlāṅka's date see W. B. Bollée, *Studien zum Sūyagada*, Heidelberg 1977, p. 3.
- 70 Śākaṭāyana is quoted by Śīlāṅka and must therefore be before him. For a discussion of Śākaṭāyana's dating see Hartmut Scharfe, *Grammatical Literature in Jan Gonda* (ed.), *History of Indian Literature*, volume 5, fascicule two, Wiesbaden 1977, p. 169.
- 71 For the Yāpanīyas see A. N. Upadhye, Yāpanīya Saṅgha: a Jain Sect, *Journal of the University of Bombay* 1, 1933, pp. 224–231 and More Light on the Yāpanīya Saṅgha in *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 55, 1976, pp. 9–22.
- 72 Śākaṭāyana, *Strīnirvāṇakevalibhuktiṭprakaraṇe*, ed. Muni Jambūvijaya, Bhavnagar 1974; KBHP = pp. 39–52. This edition contains reprints of the relevant portions of SMTV and SNT.
- 73 For the fourteen *guṇasthānas* see Jaini, *Path*, pp. 272–273.
- 74 TS 6.1 defines *yoga* as activity of body, speech and mind. It is one of the five causes of karmic bondage, defined at TS 8.1 as false doctrine, absence of discipline (*avirati*), spiritual negligence (*pramāda*) passion (*kaśāya*) and *yoga*.
- 75 TS 10.5–6.
- 76 *Bhagavaīsutta* 1.4 (SĀ I, p. 397 line 13 to bottom of page); Deleu, *Vivāhapaṇṇatti*, p. 79. Higher forms of knowledge such as *avadhi* disappeared with Jambū. See Jinabhadra, *Nihnavavāda*, p. 314.
- 77 *Bhagavaīsutta* 5.4 (SĀ I, p. 478 lines 27 to lines 30); Deleu, p. 109. See also Deleu p. 167 where the *kevalins* are said to have no senses.
- 78 *Bhagavaīsutta* 8.2 (SĀ I, p. 540 line 8 to line 14); Deleu, p. 146.
- 79 The canonical list of the *Samavāyamaṅgasutta* (SĀ I, p. 345 line 24 – p. 346 line 17) calls them *aisesa*. See also Krause, *Ancient Jaina Hymns*, pp. 20–22. For the Digambara list see JSK I, p. 141. There are also five auspicious events (*kalyāṇa*) which occur during the *tīrthāṅkara*'s life.
- 80 Among the various types of name-karma enumerated at TS 8.12 is that which



- brings about the *tīrthaṅkara* state. The various religiously auspicious acts done in the previous life which serve to form it are listed at TS 6.23. See also Jaini, *Path*, p. 260 and p. 266.
- 81 *Bhagavaīsutta* (5.4) (SĀ I, p. 474 line 11 to line 27 and p. 477 line 22 to 29); Deleu, *Viyāhapannatti*, p. 107 and p. 108.
- 82 *Paṇṇavaṇāsutta* = SĀ II, pp. 265–533; see also the edition of Muni Puṇyavijaya, Dalsukh Mālvaṇiā and Amritlāl Mohanlāl Bhojak, *Jaina Āgama Series*, number nine, parts one and two, Bombay 1971. For the incorporation of the *Paṇṇavaṇāsutta* into the *Bhagavaīsutta* see Deleu, pp. 26–28.
- 83 SĀ II, pp. 405–408 and pp. 465–478; see also *Jaina Āgama Series* edition, part two, pp. 327–331 and pp. 370–374.
- 84 See TS 2.46 and *Paṇṇavaṇāsutta*, *Jaina Āgama Series* edition, part two, p. 329.
- 85 For a canonical example of this expression see *Bhagavaīsutta* 9.31 (SĀ I, p. 597 line 2); Deleu, *Viyāhapannatti*, p. 160. The expression is elucidated by Mahendra Kumar and Nathmal Tatia, *Studies in Jaina Monachism*, Delhi 1981, p. 83.
- 86 KBHP *kārikās* 27–28 points out that, while the *kevalin* does have many miraculous attributes (*atīśaya*), some of these existed from his birth and it cannot be established that he did not eat during this period. Essentially, the *atīśayas* have nothing to do with eating. Compare SNT p. 231 lines 21 to 22: absence of sweat (one of the *atīśayas*) does not mean absence of consumption of solid food (*prakṣepāhāra*). Also SNT, p. 231 lines 22 to 24: no change takes place in the *audārika* body on the transition from the *chadmastha* state to the *kevalin* state.
- 87 SMTV, p. 612 lines 26 to 29. I take *śakti* here to mean the ability of the body to perform its function as an *audārika* body; the Syetāmbara seem to accept that the *kevalin's* body can lose strength (*bala*) even though he possesses infinite bliss. See SNT, p. 230 line 33.
- 88 SMTV, p. 612 lines 29 to 31.
- 89 KBHP *kārikā* 1 and commentary; SNT, p. 230 lines 28 to 29.
- 90 For the *taijasa* body see KBHP *kārikā* 1 and commentary; see also *Paṇṇavaṇāsutta*, chapter twenty-one.
- 91 KBHP *kārikā* 1 and commentary; SMTV, p. 613 lines 13 to 16.
- 92 KBHP *kārikā* and commentary and SMTV, p. 612 lines 12 to 19. For the sense of *sātā* and *asātā*, I quote the editors of the *Jaina Āgama Series* edition of *Paṇṇavaṇāsutta*, part two, p. 418: "The feeling of pleasure and pain that we experience on account of the due rise of *vedanīyakarma* is called *sātā-asātā* type of *vedanā* whereas the feeling of pleasure and pain that we experience on account of the instigation (*udīranā*) by other person is called *sukha-duḥkha* type of *vedanā*." There is canonical evidence for the *kevalin* experiencing *sātā*, according to SNT, p. 230 line 30.
- 93 For hunger not prejudicing bliss see KBHP *kārikās* 4–5 and commentary; also SNT, p. 231 lines 10 to 12.
- 94 SNT, p. 231 line 12.
- 95 SNT, p. 230 line 29; for life karma not being like a burnt rope, see SMTV, p. 615 lines 5 to 8. For a Digambara example of the expression, see Vāmadeva, *Bhāvasaṃgraha* verse 215 in *Bhāvasaṃgrahādīḥ*, ed. Pannālāl Sonī (Māṇikānda Digambara *Jaina Granthamālā* 20), Bombay 1922.
- 96 For the difference between the *kevalin* and the *siddha* see *Bhagavaīsutta* 14.10 (SĀ I, p. 707 line 26 – p. 708 line 19); Deleu, *Viyāhapannatti*, p. 213. For the state of complete freedom from karma, *Bhagavaīsutta* 7.1 (SĀ I, p. 509 line 20 – p. 510 line 9); Deleu, p. 131. For the continued existence of non-harming karmas in the *kevalin* see Tatia, *Studies in Jaina Philosophy*, p. 279.



- 97 See footnote 86.
- 98 SMTV, p. 613 lines 9 to 26.
- 99 KBHP kārīkā 3 commentary.
- 100 *Ibid.* rejecting the point that the *kevalin* possesses knowledge of a particularly intense kind which can have nothing to do with hunger.
- 101 SMTV, p. 613 lines 26 to 29.
- 102 KBHP kārīkā 26.
- 103 See, for example, *Akalaṅka, Tattvārthavārttika*, volume one, p. 106 lines 1 to 2.
- 104 KBHP kārīkā 25.
- 105 KBHP kārīkā 21 and SNT, p. 231. For *pūrva* see JSK volume 2, p. 216. The expression *dēṣanapūrvakoṭi* is canonical. See *Bhagavaīsutta* 12.10 (SĀ I, p. 670 line 16): *desūṇā puvvakoḍi*. The expression is defined more fully at *Bhagavaīsutta* 9.31 (SĀ I, p. 579 line 6): *jahannenam sāiregaṭṭhavāsāue ukkoseṇaṃ puvvakoḍiāue*. See also Hemacandra, *Yogaśāstra* dvitīyo bhāgaḥ, ed. Muni Jambūvijaya, Bombay 1981, 4.10.1, p. 788: 'The fire of anger burns away (the fruit of) that austerity which has been gained for ten million *pūrvas* less eight years' and Yaśovijaya, *Ādhyātmikamatakhāṇḍana* (see footnote 162), p. 61a lines 3 to 4: 'If the *kevalins*' bodies were not to grow from their ninth year for a period of ten million *pūrvas* then they would be perpetually in childhood'. See also KBHP 21 commentary. I assume that nine years here represents the minimum age for monastic ordination. Nathmal Tatia and Mahendra Kumar, *Studies in Jaina Monachism*, p. 69, without quoting the original expression, say that 'the maximum duration of the (*kevalin's*) course is one *pūrvakoṭi* less twenty-nine years.' Does this refer to the fact that Mahāvīra renounced at the age of thirty years?
- 106 SMTV, p. 614 lines 6 to 8.
- 107 SMTV, p. 614 lines 2 to 6; KBHP kārīkā 21. KBHP 22 rejects the possibility of untimely death (*apavartanā*) for the *kevalin*. For this, see Sukhlal's *Commentary on the Tattvārthasūtra*, p. 126.
- 108 SMTV, p. 614 lines 13 to 15. The period in which the first *tīrthankara* lived was presumably more suitable for spiritual cultivation than later, more corrupt times.
- 109 KBHP 29 and commentary. For the eighteen faults, see Helen Johnson, *The Deeds of the Sixty-four Illustrious Men*, Volume 6, p. 293. For the Digambara list which includes hunger see JSK, Volume 1, p. 141.
- 110 KBHP kārīkā 33 with commentary.
- 111 KBHP kārīkā 32 with commentary.
- 112 KBHP kārīkā 23 with commentary: food is like life-karma. Also SNT, p. 231 lines 8 to 10 and line 24.
- 113 See *Paṇṇavaṇāsutta*, Jaina Āgama Series Volume 2, pp. 394–398. See also Deleu *Viyāhapaṇnatti*, p. 208 and Schubring, *Lehre der Jainas*, pp. 125–126. For the Theravāda Buddhist use of the term *āhāra* see Steven Collins, *Selfless Persons: Imagery and Thought in Theravāda Buddhism*, Cambridge 1982, pp. 208–210.
- 114 See *Sūyagaḍaṃganiijutti* verse 171–173. Souls which attract *ojāhāra* are undeveloped (i.e. still in the womb) while those that attract the other two are developed. One-sensed creatures, gods and hell-beings do not take *prakṣepa* food; all other souls in *saṃsāra* do. According to an alternative explanation given by SNT, p. 229 lines 36 to 39, *prakṣepa* is that which is deposited in the body.
- 115 Quoted by KBHP kārīkā 35 commentary, SNT, p. 230 lines 1 to 2 and referred to as authoritative by SMTV, p. 612 line 31 – p. 613 line 3. According to this



verse, the exceptions to the rule about the intake of matter are souls in the process of transmigration (*viggahagatī*), *kevalins* who are bringing excessive karma to fruition by the process shown as *samudghāta* (*samuhayā*), *kevalins* without activity (*ajogī*) and *siddhas* who have attained liberation. Muni Jambūvijaya, KBHP, p. 52, quotes the Digambara version in the *Pañcasamgraha*.

- 116 SMTV, p. 613 lines 4 to 9; *lomāhāra* occurs all the time.
- 117 KBHP *kārikā* 36.
- 118 KBHP *kārikās* 30–31. SMTV, p. 615 lines 8–10 and SNT, p. 231 lines 12 to 20. *Śākaṭāyanas* refers to the *parīṣaha* of illness (*roga*) and says that gods and *tīrthaṅkaras*, as distinguished from ordinary *kevalins*, are traditionally regarded as not experiencing illness (*rogābhāvaḥ śrūyate*) from their birth but there has never been an example of a mortal in *samsāra* (such as a *kevalin*) not experiencing hunger. It should incidentally be remembered that, according to the canon, Mahāvira succumbed to fever after his duel with Makkhali Gosāla.
- 119 SMTV, p. 615 lines 2 to 7: *asātā* continues until the fourteenth *guṇasthāna* is entered; if *sātā* didn't exist, then how could the *kevalin* experience bliss (*sukha*)?
- 120 KBHP *kārikā* 5 with commentary.
- 121 KBHP *kārikā* 6 with commentary.
- 122 KBHP *kārikā* 7 with commentary. The *bhāvanās* are discussed in general terms at TS 7.3–7. For a discussion of the various canonical meanings of *bhāvanā* see Ludwig Alsdorf, *The Ārya Stanzas of the Uttarajjhyāyā: Contributions to the Text History and Interpretation of a Canonical Jaina Text*, Wiesbaden 1966, pp. 12–13.
- 123 SNT p. 23 line 29 – p. 231 line 6. The passions (*kaṣāya*) are strong attachment (*ṛāga*) and hatred (*dveṣa*). For the nine *nokaṣāyas*, the subsidiary passions, which are caused by deluding karma viz laughter, like, dislike, fear, grief, disgust and three types of sexual disturbance, see *Sukhlalji's Commentary on the Tattvārtha-sūtra*, p. 308. Compare also Hemacandra, *Yogaśāstra* 2.4, p. 167 line 6: 'the *tīrthaṅkara* has conquered faults like strong attachment and hatred by cultivating their opposites (*pratīpakṣasevā*) and so on.'
- 124 KBHP p. 43 lines 17–20.
- 125 KBHP *kārikā* 7 with commentary.
- 126 KBHP *kārikā* 8, p. 43 lines 21 to 25.
- 127 KBHP *kārikā* 8, p. 44 lines 1 to 6.
- 128 SMTV, p. 614 lines 6 to 8.
- 129 SMTV, p. 613 lines 32 to 33.
- 130 SMTV, p. 614 lines 11 to 16.
- 131 SMTV, p. 614 lines 21 – p. 615 line 1.
- 132 SMTV, p. 613 lines 2–3.
- 133 KBHP 17–18 with commentary. Hemacandra, *Yogaśāstra* 4.120, p. 952 forcibly rejects the idea that the *kevalin* by this act of altruism is similar to the Mahāyāna Buddhist *bodhisattva*: 'the Buddhist compassion, because of which the *bodhisattva* says that he will achieve *nirvāṇa* only after all other creatures have achieved liberation, is not in fact compassion, for if all creatures could be saved there would be no such thing as *samsāra*. Buddhist compassion here is just to deceive fools'. It should be remembered that Jainism holds that there is a category of souls called *abhavya* who will never achieve liberation. *Siddhi* can be valid only if there is still *samsāra*.
- TS 7.6 advises the cultivation of goodwill (*maitrī*), joy (*pramoda*), compassion



(*kārunya*) and neutrality (*mādhyaṣṭhya*) to all beings. These are very similar to the Buddhist *brahmavihāras*.

- 134 Prabhācandra, *Nyāyakumudacandra*, Mānik Candra Digambara Jaina Granthamālā, volumes 38 and 39, ed. Mahendra Kumar, Bombay 1938 and 1941; *Kevalikavalāhāravicāra*, pp. 851–865. For the dating see the introduction to volume two. Prabhācandra's other important work, the *Prameyakamalamārtanḍa* also deals with *kevalibhukti* but does not differ substantially from NKC. For Yaśovijaya's references to Prabhācandra see *Ādhyātmikamatakhāṇḍana* (footnote 162) p. 62b line 10, p. 65b verse 15, p. 67a line 14 and p. 67b line 10. Yaśovijaya regards the author of NKC and the *Prameyakamalamārtanḍa* and the Prabhācandra who commented on Samantabhadra's *Upāsakādhyaṇa* as identical. Compare Chandrabhāl Tripāthī, *Catalogue of the Jaina Manuscripts at Strasbourg*, Leiden 1975, p. 410, who regards the two as different.
- 135 See Bansidhar Bhatt, Vyavahāra-Naya and Niscaya-Naya in Kundakunda's Works, in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft: Supplement* 1974, pp. 279–291.
- 136 Verse 113. For the edition see footnote 95. For Devasena's date see Williams, *Jaina Yoga*, p. 21.
- 137 *Bhāvasamgraha* verse 235. For its date, see Williams, p. 29.
- 138 NKC, p. 856, lines 1 to 5. The Digambaras regard *āhāra* as six-fold: *nokarma* and *karma* are taken by hell-beings, animals, men and gods; *kavala* is taken by men and animals, *lepya* by trees, *ojas* by egg-born creatures and *manas* by gods. Only metaphorically does scriptural tradition describe the *kevalin* as taking the first two; in reality he is free from passions. See *Samayasāra*, *Sacred Book of the Jains*, pp. 209–210.
- 139 NKC, p. 856 line 5 – p. 857 line 1.
- 140 NKC, p. 857 lines 2–3. For the religious ordeal called *Kośapāna*, see *Yājñavalkyaśmṛti* 2, 112–113.
- 141 NKC, p. 857 lines 8 to 19. The definition of the *paramaudārika* body is that of Jayasena, the twelfth century commentator on Kundakunda's *Pravacanasāra* (ed. A. N. Upadhye, Bombay 1935, p. 28). It is unclear to me precisely what is meant by the body lacking the basic constituents. Compare Amṛtacandrasūri, *Laghutattvasphoṭa*, ed. P. S. Jaini, L. D. Series, Vol. 62, Ahmedabad 1978, p. 60 verse 13: 'Free from anxiety you always merely observe this body of yours which is sustained by nourishment derived from its own elements (*svadhātuposopacitam*).'
- 142 NKC, p. 857 lines 19 to 20. Prabhācandra goes on to point out that the *atiśaya*, absence of growth of hair, stems from the destruction of the harming karmas and has nothing to do with Indra's consecration of the *tīrthaṅkaras* at their birth by passing his sign of office (*vajra*) over their hair and nails. That would mean that their hair did not grow up from the roots at all or that all the *tīrthaṅkaras* had the same type of hair. But Rṣabha's hair, for example, was different because it was not characterised by the quality of *agurulaghu* (for which see *Sukhlalji's Commentary on the Tattvārthasūtra*, p. 311). In fact their hair and nails cease to grow on the destruction of the harming karmas. If it be accepted that they eat, then it must also be accepted that their nails and hair grow and that they blink, as in the *chadmastha* stage. See NKC, p. 857 line 21 – p. 858 line 6.
- 143 NKC, p. 858 line 6 – p. 859 line 2.
- 144 NKC, p. 859 lines 3 to 8. For *śukladhyāna* see Jaini, *Path*, pp. 257–258.
- 145 NKC, p. 859 lines 9 to 17. According to Prabhācandra (NKC, p. 859 line 18 –



- p. 860 line 5) the process of *samudghāta* by which the soul expands outside the confines of its body and assumes various shapes (*daṇḍakapātādividhānam*) in order to reduce excess feeling-producing karma would be pointless if that karma was still to produce some kind of negative effect afterwards so that liberation could not be achieved. In reality, feeling-producing karma can have no effect upon the *kevalin*, just as he cannot be subject to passions arising through contact with the objects of the senses. It is only deluding karma which can bring these things about. For *kevalisamudghāta* see Tatia, *Studies in Jaina Philosophy*, p. 280 and Jaini, *Path*, pp. 268–269.
- 146 NKC, p. 860 lines 6 to 17. Prabhācandra suggests (NKC, p. 860 lines 18 to 21) that scriptural references to meditation as a way of completely stopping hunger take precedence over references to alms-begging which is merely temporary.
- 147 NKC, p. 860 line 23 – p. 861 line 8.
- 148 NKC, p. 861 lines 8 to 15.
- 149 NKC, p. 861 lines 16 to 24.
- 150 NKC, p. 862 lines 3 to 9. Prabhācandra interprets TS 9.11 ‘there are eleven (*ekādaśa*) endurances in the *kevalin*’ as a prohibition by the dubious means of breaking up *ekādaśa* as if it contained the negative prefix *a-* so that the word is taken to mean ‘not ten when exceeded by one’ (*ekena adhikā na daśa ekādaśa*).
- 151 NKC, p. 862 lines 13 to 15. Here Prabhācandra is specifically referring to the *īrthaṅkara*.
- 152 NKC, p. 862 line 19 – p. 863 line 4.
- 153 NKV, p. 863, lines 5 to 9.
- 154 NKC, p. 863, lines 10 to 21.
- 155 NKC, p. 863 line 22 – page 864 line 5.
- 156 NKC, p. 864 lines 6 to 13.
- 157 NKC, p. 864 lines 14 to 24.
- 158 NKC, p. 865 lines 1 to 10.
- 159 The bulk of his treatment of *kevalibhukti* is reprinted in Muni Jambūvijaya's edition of *Strīnirvāṇakevalibhukti prakaraṇe*; see footnote 73.
- 160 K. K. Dixit, *Jaina Ontology*, p. 155
- 161 For Yaśovijaya see Schubring, *Lehre der Jainas*, p. 52 and Williams, *Jaina Yoga*, p. 16 and p. 27.
- 162 Bhāvnagar, *saṃvat* 1965.
- 163 *Ādhyātmikamatakhāṇḍana* verse 10 and commentary, pp. 61a–62b. Yaśovijaya also attempts to refute the Digambara view that a person on the religious path does not need an alms-bowl and need only use his hands as a receptacle for food. Using an alms-bowl, he claims, does not imply any sort of worldly possession for, by the same token, the human body would also be a possession. Any possible delusion which might arise from using such a bowl would have to be extended to basic human activities like sitting and walking; in reality nothing in the world is a bond or a non-bond, it is only infatuation (*mūrchā*) which makes it seem so. Indeed, not using an alms bowl leads to the worst of sins, destruction of life-forms, for, if the monk were to eat with his hands, liquid would drip down through the gaps in his fingers to which insects would be attracted and then trodden upon. To place such importance upon lack of an alms-bowl is, claims Yaśovijaya, as foolish as thinking that nakedness is connected with omniscience, for, if that were so, as soon as the *kevalin* put on clothes or took up an alms-bowl, his omniscience would disappear. In reality, the *kevalin* has conquered the afflictions and eating in fact means taking what is suitable and avoiding what is unsuitable. See *Ādhyātmikamatakhāṇḍana*, pp. 57b–59b.



- 164 *Ādhyātmikamatakhaṇḍana*, p. 67b–p. 69b.
- 165 ed. A. N. Upadhye, Bombay 1935, p. 29 lines 12 to 14.
- 166 SMTV, p. 619 lines 17 to 19 (... *kleśasya bhagavatya adyāpy ā muktigamanāt sarvathā anivṛtteḥ*). For *kleśas* in Buddhism, see Étienne Lamotte, *Passions and Impregnations of the Passions in Buddhism*, in L. Cousins et al. (eds), *Buddhist Studies in Honour of I. B. Horner*, pp. 91–104 where *kleśa* is translated by 'passion'.
- 167 NKC, p. 857 line 12 (*mānuṣīm prakṛtim abhyātāvan devatāsv api ca devatā yataḥ*). Note that Prabhācandra comes very close (NKC, p. 861 line 1) to identifying the *kevalin* with the *siddha*.
- 168 See Vilas Sangave, *Jaina Community: a Social Survey*, Bombay 1980, p. 52.
- 169 *Bhagavaīsutta* 5.4 (SĀ I, p. 475 lines 11 to 15); Deleu, *Viyāhapannatti*, p. 107.
- 170 *Bhagavaīsutta* 12.9 (SĀ I, p. 669 lines 9 to 22); Deleu, p. 190. The *arhats* are described as *devāhivedā*. For Digambara definitions of *deva* see JSK, volume 2, pp. 442–448.
- 171 A. N. Upadhye, *The Jaina Conception of Divinity*, in *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde süd-und Ostasiens* 12–13, 1968–9, pp. 389–393.
- 172 See Sangave *op. cit.*, p. 228. Sangave regards such worship as against the 'real spirit' of Jainism. There are Jaina sects, such as the Sthānakvāsīs, which reject image-worship.
- 173 Richard Gombrich, *Precept and Practice: traditional Buddhism in the rural highlands of Ceylon*, Oxford 1971, p. 139.
- 174 Martin Southwold, *Buddhism and the definition of religion*, *Man*, 13, 1978, p. 366 (pp. 362–379).
- 175 Sangave *op. cit.*, pp. 226–227 and Jaini, *Path*, pp. 193–194.
- 176 See Alan Millar and John K. Riches, *Interpretation: a theoretical perspective and some applications*, *Numen* 26, 1981, pp. 29–53.
- 177 Martin Southwold, *Buddhism in Life: the anthropological study of religion and the Sinhalese practice of Buddhism*, Manchester 1983.
- 178 *Ibid.*, p. 181. For belief-avowals, p. 154.
- 179 *Ibid.*, p. 168. On p. 197 Southwold clearly views Jainism as a religion of the same kind as Theravāda Buddhism.
- 180 P. S. Jaini, Jina Rṣabha as an avatar of Viṣṇu, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 40, 1977, p. 335 (pp. 321–337). In future studies of Jainism it would be wise to avoid assigning priority to monastic, intellectual or textual views of the religion over "popular" or lay views; both are two sides of the same religious coin.
- 181 E.g. *Ādipurāṇa* 7.286, 25.10 and 25.14. Note that it is a fundamental tenet of Jainism that the soul is eternal so that, while the *tīrthaṅkara* may be said to be outwith *saṃsāra*, he cannot be said to be defunct in the same way as the Buddha.
- 182 *Ādipurāṇa* 25.40.

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## COMPARATIVE LIMINALITY

### INTRODUCTION TO THE PAPERS FROM THE JERUSALEM SEMINAR

The study of religion is an interdisciplinary and comparative study in which the specializations of many scholars focus on the historical and human phenomena of religion. This journal wishes to provide a forum for such study through the publication of papers which reflect these methodological perspectives on major theoretical issues in the study of religion. In this issue the reader will find collected the papers from the Jerusalem Seminar on Comparative Liminality held at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. This seminar was one of the series of seminars on comparative civilizations which have been undertaken by the Department of Sociology and the Truman Research Institute of the Hebrew University for the last twelve years. The seminar was held under the direction of Professor S. N. Eisenstadt and Professor Victor Turner during the academic year of 1982-83.

With Professor Turner's death on 18 December, 1983, after a relatively short illness, scholarship has lost one of its most insightful theoreticians and most gifted teachers. Professor Turner's studies of ritual and non-ritual liminality have proven to be major theoretical advances and insights not only for students of religions, but also for anthropologists, historians and sociologists. Indeed, during the past two decades, his work has been repeatedly singled out as a major achievement by scholars in disciplines outside Turner's own field of anthropology. His work provided the theoretical foundations for the reformulation of many classical problems in disciplines as distinct as comparative literature, art history, drama, anthropology, sociology, history, philosophy and the history of religions.

The papers collected here reflect the impact of Professor Turner's research upon the dialogue between anthropology, sociology, history and the history of religions. The collection begins with Professor Turner's paper on the relationship between liminality, Kabbalah and the media in which he expressed some of his latest thoughts on the nature of liminality. He draws a distinction between the ritual liminality of pre-industrial societies and what he calls 'liminoid' experiences in industrial, modern societies. Here, he argues that the liminoid represents the persistence of the tribal and classical liminality, although removed from the traditional contexts of rites of passage and being highly individualized.



Turner's paper is followed by a series of case studies which arise out of the need to study liminality in historical and comparative contexts. The case studies range from analysis of liminal structures in preliterate societies through those dealing with various historical great civilizations—above all Christianity in different settings and Buddhist civilizations, up to a consideration of modern societies. Uri Almagor takes the case of the semi-pastoral Dassanetch of southwest Ethiopia in order to demonstrate that unstructured liminality, within both ritual and non-ritual contexts, is connected with two different conceptualizations of social time, or what the Dassanetch refer to as 'long time' and 'short time'. He argues that these experiences of time both bind or unite generations within the tribal world or separate them. Steve Kaplan's paper studies the image and activities of the living Ethiopian holy man. He argues that this living holy man of Ethiopian history well illustrates 'outsiderhood', which along with liminality and structural inferiority, comprise major domains of antistructure within culture. Ilana Silber's paper examines monasticism as an alternative structure in Theravada Buddhism and medieval Christianity. Silber begins by noting Turner's observation that society can be understood as a constant interweaving and interplay between 'structure' and 'anti-structure'. She indicates that there are differences in the monastic phenomena under consideration in her study and then explores the meaning of movement from one structural context to another. Michael Heyd observes that the link between enthusiasm and divine inspiration at the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern world has been treated repeatedly through Weber's analysis of the conflict between charisma and institution, but this he argues leaves out many of the most distinctive features of what was called 'enthusiasm' by its critics and which were directly concerned with the fabric of society. Heyd describes how the confrontation with anti-structure in the late 17th and early 18th centuries led to a 'tightening' of social structure, a response which has not been adequately studied by historians. He notes how social structure changed in this confrontation, including the role of Scripture and its exegesis, the harmonization of natural theology and the new science, the transformation of folly, and the banishment of imagination. In so doing, Heyd makes a powerful historical case for the transformation of structure in its encounter with anti-structure.

The last two case studies treat more modern phenomena. Indeed, Turner was himself intensely interested in how traditional forms continued in history and the dynamics of historical change. Erik Cohen explores one of the most critical and theoretical issues in Turner's conception of structure and anti-structure. Liminality and the liminoid appear strongest in societies which posit a sacred transcendent realm, with which as Cohen writes, 'the incumbents are in communion, in their extraordinary state of liminality'. This is the dynamic which explains the power of the liminal or liminoid to effect personal



and societal transitions in the ritual process. But what is the nature of liminality and the ritual process in societies, such as modern, secular Western ones, which are seemingly based on immanentistic values and whose construction of reality do not explicitly recognize the existence of an ontologically real, transcendent realm, or reality with which the modern individual may communicate? Cohen explores this question through the example of tourism in modern secular society. Elihu Katz and Daniel Dayan begin their paper by noting that television viewing may be understood as a liminoid activity in which huge numbers of people disconnect and detach themselves from the everyday and their routine social structures. Within this liminoid experience, shared by masses of people, there are events or live broadcasts of great events which function as traditional ritual liminality, transforming stratified, individuated and highly differentiated masses into the *communitas* of whole societies. A whole series of events fit into this category; Sadat's visit to Jerusalem 1977, the Pope's first trip to Poland, moon landings, De Gaulle's symbolic liberation of Québec, the funerals of Kennedy and Mountbatten, the Royal Wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana, the Olympics, the Watergate Hearings, and presidential debates. Katz and Dayan propose two typologies for these great media events, one defined in ceremonial categories and the other defined in linguistic categories, and then demonstrate how television provides access to ritual participation, allowing these great events to function in a liminal manner.

RICHARD D. HECHT



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# LIMINALITY, KABBALAH, AND THE MEDIA

**Victor Turner**

I was involved in a good many 'liminal' situations during my visit to Israel in 1983. So it would be useful to define what I mean by the term (see also V. Turner<sup>6</sup> pp. 94-96, 125; 1974: 259; and<sup>7</sup> pp. 25-27, 41-42, 46). *Limen* is Latin for 'threshold'; literally, a threshold divides two spaces. This may be a closed from an open space, as the threshold of a house, the internal divisions of a closed space, like the doors or partitions within a house. A threshold may also divide two times, for example work time from leisure time, school time from play time. But here we are already becoming metaphorical, regarding time *as if* it were space. We will get more metaphorical yet, when we see how cultures elaborate the metaphor of threshold, regarding it as the crossing point, both in space and time, from one defined or labelled state of being or social status to another. Such crossings or *limina* may be brief or elongated. Carrying a bride through a doorway, ordering an army recruit to take two paces forward, may take only a few seconds—though they symbolize vital sociocultural changes, from unweddedness to weddedness, from civilian to military status—but they are rich in meaning. Other cultural crossings may take much longer, both chronologically and subjectively, and perhaps could be likened to 'tunnels' rather than 'thresholds', cunicular rather than liminal. One example would be the class of initiation rituals which move the initiands from culturally defined childhood into adulthood, found in so many societies past and present. In these, boys and girls are removed from the mundane sphere of dependence on their mothers, submitted to an operation which leaves indelible marks on their body, such as circumcision, scarification, cicatrization, tooth-removal or filing, spirited away to a site set aside from everyday life in forest, cave, or mountain, submitted to a variety of ordeals physical, psychological, given teaching by elders on esoteric matters which are deemed pertinent to know, trained intensively in skills appropriate to their age and gender, such as sexual expertise and hunting, given moral instruction as to how to behave to kin, non-kin, and strangers, and retained for periods from a few months to several years before being returned, often through elaborate rites, to the quotidian world. In many

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societies, funerary rites are equally prolonged and elaborated, where mythically described steps in the course of the journey of the dead person's spirit in the hereafter are calibrated with the sequence of ritual events which also, step by step, bring his or her successors and inheritors into new, viable relationships with one another as the elements of the deceased's status and property are inventoried and redistributed among the heirs.

The great French folklorist and ethnographer, Arnold van Gennep, was the first to call attention in the early 20th century to the importance of the space-time transitions, which he called '*rites de passage*', in the regular working of sociocultural systems, mostly of the pre-industrial cyclical and repetitive types. Although he wrote a good deal about the ritual ways in which strangers were incorporated into 'tribal' societies, and about rituals preparing societal members for journeys into alien territories, in fact about limina between the outside and the inside, his main concern was with passage rites within relatively firmly bounded systems—from one room to another within a house to refer back to my original illustration. These passage rites were divided by van Gennep into two major types (to which I will add a third): *life-crisis rituals* based on cultural definitions of the human life-cycle. They include: (a) rituals focused on pregnancy, notably first pregnancy; (b) naming rituals; (c) pre-pubertal and pubertal initiations; (d) betrothal and marital rituals, often distributed over time and linked with pubertal rites; (e) initiation into prestige-bestowing adult associations, including secret societies, sometimes having a number of increasingly esoteric grades; (f) rituals elevating individuals to high office or royal, chiefly, or priestly rank; (g) funerary rituals, sometimes followed by rituals of second burial or bringing home the ancestor.

Second, *Seasonal or calendrical rituals*: these tend to stress the *whole* community, whether it be a village, tribe, or nation, as it passes through the agricultural or astronomical cycles, whether sowing, first fruits, and harvest rituals, rituals performed at midwinter, midsummer, or other solstitial points of change, rituals relating to the Venus or Jupiter cycles, or other junctures in the cultural reckonings of recurrent time, such as the intercalary days between solar and lunar calendars. Often, these seasonal rituals, whose successors in the historical rituals are carnivals and other feasts, express reversals of customary status, the poor or underclass categories dressing up or portraying themselves as aristocrats or the wealthy, and developing liminal systems of pseudohierarchy, and the normally dominant categories accepting their ritually humble roles. These reversals occur not always or invariably, but often enough to be crossculturally noticeable. Total, 'law-like' generalizations about human behaviour are liable to fail owing to our species-specific capacity for innovation and creative adaptation. Nevertheless, one can say broadly that in life-crisis rites, which normally bring about an elevation of status, there is,



first, a stripping of all previous status, a humiliation and equalization of those going through passage, before the marks of superior status are assigned; one must be pressed down before being *raised* up. While in seasonal rituals, those who are permanently defined as inferior, members of lower castes, outcasts, or despised ethnicities, are culturally allowed for a few hours or days to 'play' at being members of groups or categories defined as being 'higher', to play with the symbols and trappings of power, while the normally powerful must either endure the scorn of the 'lower orders' or even flee the entire scene of seasonal-ritual action. Ultimately, in both types, the political and economic structures of the everyday, 'secular' social system are re-asserted and, in a way, regenerated, by these ritual reversals. Aroused sentiments of rebellion against the social order are, as it were, divested, in symbolic action, of their antinomian equality and transferred as a generalized quantum of affect to symbols that represent the living continuity of the society now conceived as a glowing ideal unity, standing above its concrete internal divisions, both vertical and horizontal. But the liminal moment, nevertheless, exists when all hangs in the balance, when change might be possible, the perilous moment when social structure momentarily has to loose its grip, in order that change, even within its systematic boundaries, *has to be* effected. For liminality is essential to social transition, and it means crossing an abyss. There is here, implicitly, a risk, a gamble. Hence, I think, the dense clustering of taboos and prohibitions of various types around the liminal periods of sociocultural transition, especially those ritualized in the life cycle. For it is this class of ritual that possesses the most prolonged liminal period. Festivals and carnivals occurring as nodes in the agricultural year, changes from winter to summer hunting, or shifts from wet season to dry season cattle herding in transhuman pastoralism, are less liable to disturb the fundamental social order, despite their often heady atmosphere of license, since their goals are often pure enjoyment and good-natured self-expression, and their discharges of inter-group or inter-category hostility either merely verbal or at most stopping short of lethal violence. And they do not last very long—they explode rather than burn slowly. Nevertheless, in periods of radical societal change, as Natalie Davis, Le Roy Ladurie, and Robert Bazucha have shown for early modern France, carnivals can become politicized. Political and religious authorities come to fear their revolutionary potential and impose stringent rules upon their performance, reducing their power to lampoon and criticize ruling elites and classes.

A third kind of passage ritual consists of what I have called *rituals of affliction*, which abound in sub-Saharan Africa. These are concerned with the remedying of illness, misfortune, disaster, or catastrophe, both individual and corporate. Here the *limina*, the passages are between sickness and health, life and death, starvation and a full belly, barrenness and fertility, sometimes war



and peace. Since afflictions are often conceived in pre-industrial societies as a consequence of the transgression of moral norms and/or magical taboos established by deities or ancestral spirits, who then punish the transgressors, rituals of affliction tend to relate directly or indirectly to the current state of inter-personal and inter-group conflicts in a demarcated field of on-going social relations. In societies which do not sharply distinguish, as we do in the Western tradition, between social, moral, and natural orders, and regard the corporate group rather than the individual as the salient actor in social interaction, illness and misfortune are often seen as the manifestation of social conflict, open or secret. The gods or ancestors punish those who disrupt the salient social bonds. That is why, in my African studies, I have found divination into the hidden causes of misfortune and illness, and the rituals that diviners prescribe to assuage ancestral wrath, usually involving episodes of public confession of hidden grudges, to be indicators and inventories of the contemporary state of adversary relations between groups and sub-groups, even when life has hitherto appeared to have been going along relatively placidly at the overt levels of kinship, economic, and political action. One might describe rituals of affliction as being highly 'context sensitive', 'context' here being contemporary social-cultural context.

There are many other kinds of ritual too, and various authors have sought to discriminate ritual from kindred modes of symbolic action, such as ceremony, decorum, ritualization, etc., but I am interested today in looking at liminality, a space-time phenomenon not always found in every ritual, but suggestive for the understanding of many social processes and states found outside of ritual contexts. As is known, van Gennep divided *rites of passage* (and most rituals have to some extent a passage quality) into three stages or phases, varying in relative duration and intensity according to the nature of the passages as defined first within a particular culture; secondly cross-culturally, and thirdly in relation to the scale and complexity of the societies considered. In Stage One, *rites of separation* detach the ritual unit, single or corporate, from mundane life; in Stage Two, *rites of margin or limen* are performed in limbo space and time for those undergoing transition, who are, so to speak, neither here nor there but betwixt-and-between, in terms of traditional classification and categories applying to mundane life before or after the rites, having lost their previous status and cultural location and not yet having passed through to their new place (or returned to their old place) in the sociocultural order. In Stage Three, *rites of re-aggregation*, the ritual subjects are moved from liminality back into quotidian reality and society by a series of symbolic actions which endows them with the insignia and emblems of a new status. Purification from the otherwise polluting sacredness and potency of liminality is a common feature of these rituals of return and re-incorporation.

Now I am inclined to think that the entire ritual process described by van



Gennep can be seen as 'liminal', not merely its middle phase alone. I am indeed, not deeply committed to his division into *three* parts—though I do not believe, as some say, that he borrowed his tripartite sequence from Hegel, rather, he inferred it from his empirical study of thousands of rituals. I have seen rituals that return the participants for a time to everyday life, then some time later move them back into a liminal state, repeating this pattern for a considerable time. And other rites have practically no 'middle' phase or period at all, merely consisting of ritual specialists chanting a formula in a house to make it auspicious and then departing. Yet, as I said, all rituals are more or less *liminal*, whatever their internal segmentation or lack thereof, in that they are interposed between stretches of 'ordinary' time, or occur either in places 'set apart' from ordinary activities or temporarily changed in nature to accommodate ritual action.

However it is clear that in many protracted rituals, such as initiations, there comes into being, whether naturally or by cultural edict, an inner space, a period 'in and out of time', to borrow T. S. Eliot's phrase, which might be described as 'hyperliminal'. The term 'inner space' recalls to me my recent reading in Kabbalic literature—most recently two books by Mordechai Rotenberg of Hebrew University (*Damnation and Deviance*, 1978; *Dialogue with Deviance*, 1983).<sup>3</sup> I refer specifically to R. Isaac Luria's notion of *Tsimtsum*, 'contraction', 'concentration'. I will first give Gershom Scholem's succinct account of *Tsimtsum* and then try to show how this might relate to the notion of liminal space. Scholem points out that Luria opposed the pantheistic interpretation of the *Zohar* put forward by earlier Kabbalists. He is concerned with the *first* act of creation. 'The existence of the universe is made possible by a process of shrinkage in God'. Luria begins by putting a question which gives the appearance of being naturalistic and, if you like, somewhat crude. How can there be a world if God is everywhere? If God is 'all in all', how can there be things that are not God? How can God create the world out of nothing (*creatio ab nihilo*), if there is no nothing? To anticipate no liminality *in principio*. This is the question. According to Luria, God was compelled to make room for the world by, as it were, abandoning a region within Himself, a kind of primordial space from which he withdrew in order to return to it in the act of creation and revelation. The first act of *En-Sof*, the Infinite Being, is therefore not a step outside, but a step inside, a movement of recoil, of falling back upon oneself, of withdrawing into oneself. Instead of emanation (in the neo-Platonic mode, and in the view of earlier Kabbalists), we have the opposite, contraction (see Scholem<sup>4</sup> pp. 260–261). Now I am not going to follow Scholem into the complexities of Lurianic Kabbala, nor Rotenberg into the implications of this view for psychology, criminology, or sociology. Here I am merely contrasting Luria with Durkheim, who equated God with society in an updated version of pantheism, or rather, pansocietism, where the Durkheimian notion of the



sacred, in Scholem's terms, would seem to represent the concentration of society (read 'God' in Scholem) *at* a point (Scholem speaks of this point as being in the Midrash the concentration of the *Shekhinah*, the Divine Presence, in the holiest of Holies, at the place of the *Cherubim*). Isaac Luria, to the contrary, posited God's retreat *away* from a point, but nevertheless containing the whole of creation. In the same way, or perhaps analogously, we might think of society contracting itself *away* from the 'ritual point' which van Gennep called liminality. In other words society, to use Scholem's term, *exiles* itself from its totality into the often 'profound seclusion' of liminality. This leaves room for a 'dialogic', a counterpoint of ideas, between the liminal and the social structural (rather than a conversation or argument between persons, as the term 'dialogue' might suggest). The liminal is, at least in principle, freed from, emptied of, the social structural. And, just as the social structural may be likened to the indicative mood of verbs in many language families, so may the liminal space-time 'point' be regarded as society's subjunctive mood, the mood of may-be, might-be, as-if, possibility, hypothesis, speculation. Liminal space is potentially, before refilling, a realm of meonic feeling.

The liminal, then, might possibly be construed as the product of contraction, a space and time left empty, within which creative activities *may* or *might* take place. For, as in Luria, the liminal space is not abandoned to chaos or negativity—it is refilled, so to speak, from the essence of the social. Thus, in many tribal initiations, the initiands are exposed to cosmogonic myths and shown symbolic objects which illustrate the myths. What is dark, dangerous, unpredictable, personified often by witches, demons, and ghosts (perhaps these could be likened to the *kelipot*, the 'shells' of Kabbalism), and portrayed by masks and other disguises worn by elders, inhabiting the primary liminal domain, can be exorcised or, alternatively, domesticated and remoulded to fit into the cosmic designs. When the safeguards of quotidian social structure are removed, the dark side, the 'other side' of liminality is exposed, for society and the selves that compose it have deep roots. It is interesting to consider how crossculturally prevalent in liminality are symbols of dying, humbling, stripping, invisibility, darkening, levelling, deconstruction, emptying—to be followed by symbols of rebirth, reclothing, fertilizing, elevating, reconstruction, light, and fire.

In many societies with subsistence economies on the precarious brink of survival, liminality tends to become quite rigorously structured by such cosmological myths and 'showings'. But even here there is a strong component of play, of the 'ludic', as Huizinga puts it. Woodcarvers, songmakers, dancers, other aestheticians of the liminal domain, are encouraged to innovate and improvise within the limits of a tradition which has its own grammar and symbolic vocabulary. Dreaming, trancing, the use of hallucinogens and sacred fermented drinks by adepts and officiants may sometimes be the source of new



ritual symbols, or may extend the meaning of old myths. Novices are given riddles to solve, tasks to perform, that call on their ingenuity and elicit their talents. In the social realm, a contrast arises between the unquestioning obedience initiands must show to their instructors, and the close friendships formed among the initiands themselves. In neither case do preritual rules of kinship conduct apply. Social structure is simple and generic. Specific kinship gives way to general obedience of juniors to seniors, and absolute equality among initiands—though this may lead to the formation of lifelong friendships between particular couples and groups, normative *communitas* providing, as it were, a favourable ground for spontaneous or existential *communitas*. Discipline and comradeship are two sides of the same coin, a coin minted in liminality, a freely chosen contract, Rotenberg might say, generated in the liminal situation of contraction.

So much for liminality, notably ritual liminality in pre-industrial societies, where there is a high level of consensus as to values, norms, symbols, and the cosmologies that sustain these and assign meaning to social action. But does something similar to this culturally constructed or contractile liminal space-time exist at all in Leviathan or Megalopolis, in large-scale, complex, industrial societies, with a fine-cut division of labour, developed class-structure, plural ethnicities, manifold voluntary associations, fast and elaborate means of communication and transportation, linked to an international economy, and monitored and reflected by multiple electronic media? Indeed, can one speak of transitions, *limina*, at all, when everything appears to be in continuous transition, in everlasting flux? Perhaps Rilke was right, in one of his *Duino Elegies*, in finding some relief from the flux in the 'Squares of Paris, where the modiste, Madam La Mort, winds and binds the restless ways of the world'. But he goes on at once to declare that she makes of them the fancy hats of transient fashions, patterned eddies that swiftly lose their shape in what another poet, W.H. Auden has called 'the shifting tide . . . of History that never stops or dies, and held one moment burns the hand'.

It seems that we have the opposite problem to the cyclical, repetitive sociocultural systems mentioned earlier. (Though I am doubtful whether any societies escape change; I regard those famous 'systems' as both native and anthropologists' models. Nevertheless, Lévi-Strauss is probably correct in regarding 'structure' as dominant over 'history' in the 'cool', 'neolithic' societies he so obviously prefers. Transition in these is put in its place and subordinated to continually replicated form.) In our society, we have the need to generate *limina* that are the acme of stasis, of continuity, of seeming timelessness in immersion in mythical time, *illud tempus*, in some cases. Hence the current nostalgia for 'roots', the re-creation, aided often by media, of 'ethnic' associations, the absorption in various forms of sport, each with its rules and 'fixtures', its leagues, where substantially the same teams play each



other year after year. It may be objected that many in our society occupy their leisure by travelling, as tourists or pilgrims. But such travels are often highly scheduled and orderly; and many pilgrimages are a search for roots.

Yet the appearance of flux in modernity is misleading. Many of us have highly stable status roles in massive bureaucratic and professional structures, often on a national or even international scale. Many of us clock in and clock out of factories. Others are tightly bound to the wheel of the market and Stock Exchange. We are held in the grip of *les villes tentaculaires*. But only the observant in churches, sects, cults, and religious movements have well articulated ritual liminality. And these groups, too, become bureaucratized, and to a greater or lesser extent secularized; or else defiantly and rigidly desecularized. So I repeat: where is liminality today in relation to our mainline politico-economic structures? Wherever it is, it is more likely to be found in the times allocated to leisure than in those dedicated to work in our industrialized societies. We must examine what people do in the times before and after work, at the weekends, on public holidays, on vacation. Some provision may be made in the work process for moments of release from task-structured behaviours: lunch breaks, tea breaks, and so forth. But the work ethic even penetrates the three-martini lunch, during which, sometimes, deals may be clinched and bargains struck. It is hard to call these intervals genuinely 'liminal'.

In my essay 'Liminal to Liminoid'<sup>7</sup> I list some of the genres of art and performance which may be the true inheritors of tribal liminality. 'True', in the sense that these genres of cultural performance, diverse and multiple as they are, perform something of the same meaning-conferring, and often reflexive role for a complex industrial society that a single system of ritual does for a pre-industrial society. I coined the term 'liminoid'. I know that this term is gratingly neologistic, but it does suggest that there are performative modes or genres that are akin to and possibly derive from tribal and feudal rituals (regarding a whole ritual as 'liminal' in relation to everyday life). These differ from the earlier liminality as being more the creation of individual than of collective or 'folk' inspiration, and often being critical in character, rather than furthering the purposes of the existing social order, although that order has been by no means backward in exploiting liminoid means for its own ends. I will finish this introduction by quoting certain passages from the essay mentioned above which distinguishes between liminal and liminoid phenomena in an analytical frame which draws on the insights of the great classical social thinkers, and is frankly in the tradition of cultural evolutionism. I have also borrowed a term or two from Georges Gurwitsch<sup>1</sup> though I am by no means in agreement with much of his general theoretical position.

In tribal societies, liminality is often functional, in the sense of being a special duty or performance *required* in the course of work or activity; its very



reversals and inversions tend to compensate for rigidities or unfairness of normative structure. But in industrial society, the *rite de passage* form, built into the calendar and/or modelled on organic processes of maturation and decay, no longer suffices for total societies. Leisure provides the opportunity for a multiplicity of optional, liminoid genres of literature, drama, and sport, which are not conceived of as 'antistructure' to normative structure where 'antistructure is an auxillary function of the larger structure' (Sutton-Smith, 1972: 17). Rather they are to be seen as Sutton-Smith envisages 'play', as 'experimentation with variable repertoires', consistent with the manifold variation made possible by developed technology and an advanced stage of the division of labour (p. 18). The liminoid genres, to adapt Sutton-Smith (he was referring to 'antistructure', a term he borrowed from me, but claimed that I used it in a system-maintenance sense only), 'not only make tolerable the system as it exists, they keep its members in a more flexible state with respect to that system, and, therefore, with respect to possible change. Each system [Sutton-Smith goes on] has structural and antistructural adaptive functions. The normative structure represents the working equilibrium, the antistructure represents the latent system of potential alternatives from which novelty will arise when contingencies in the normative system require it. We might more correctly call this second system the *protostructural* system because it is the precursor of innovative forms. It is the source of new culture' (pp. 18-19).

In the so-called 'high culture' of complex societies, the liminoid is not only removed from a *rite de passage* context, it is also 'individualized'. The solitary artist *creates* the liminoid phenomena, the collectivity *experiences* collective liminal symbols. This does not mean that the maker of liminoid symbols, ideas, images, does so *ex nihilo*; it only means that he is privileged to make free with his social heritage in a way impossible to members of cultures in which the liminal is to a large extent the sacrosanct.

When we compare liminal with liminoid processes and phenomena, then, we find crucial differences as well as similarities. Let me try to set some of these out. In a crude, preliminary way they provide some delimitation of the field of comparative symbology.

1. *Liminal phenomena* tend to predominate in tribal and early agrarian societies possessing what Durkheim has called 'mechanical solidarity', and dominated by what Henry Maine has called 'status'. *Liminoid phenomena* flourish in societies with 'organic solidarity', bonded reciprocally by 'contractual' relations and generated by and following the industrial revolution, though they perhaps begin to appear on the scene in city-states on their way to becoming empires (of the Graeco-Roman type) and in feudal societies (including not only the European sub-types, found between the 10th and 14th centuries in France, England, Flanders and Germany, but also in far less 'pluralistic' Japanese, Chinese, and Russian types of feudalism or



quasi-feudalism). But they first begin clearly to develop in Western Europe in nascent capitalist societies, with the beginnings of industrialization and mechanization, the transformation of labour into a commodity, and the appearance of real social classes. The heyday of this type of nascent industrial society was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—climaxing in the 'Age of Enlightenment', though it had begun to appear in Western Europe in the second half of the 16th century, particularly in England, where, a little later, Francis Bacon published his *Novum Organum* in 1620, a work which definitely linked scientific with technical knowledge. Liminoid phenomena continued to characterize the democratic-liberal societies which dominated Europe and America in the 19th and early 20th centuries, societies with universal suffrage, the predominance of legislative over executive power, parliamentarianism, a plurality of political parties, freedom of workers and employers to organize, freedom of joint-stock companies, trusts, and cartels to organize, and the separation of church and state. Liminoid phenomena are still highly visible in the post-World War II managerial societies of organized capitalism of the modern USA, West Germany, France, Britain, Italy, Japan and other countries of the Western bloc. Here the economy is no longer left even ostensibly to 'free competition' but is planned both by the state itself—usually in the interests of the reigning industrial and financial upper-middle classes—and by private trusts and cartels (national and international), often with the support of the state, which puts its considerable bureaucratic administrative machinery in their service. Nor are liminoid phenomena absent from the systems of centralized state collectivism exemplified by Russia and China, following their revolutions, and by the 'people's democracies' of Eastern Europe (with the exception of Yugoslavia, which has been moving in the direction of decentralized collectivism). Here the new culture tries to synthesize, as far as possible, humanism and technology—not the easiest of tasks—substituting for natural rhythms the logic of technological processes, while attempting to divest these of their socially exploitative character and proposing them to be generated and sustained by the 'popular genius'. This, however, with collectivism, tends to reduce the potentially limitless freedom of liminoid genres to the production of forms congenial to the goal of integrating humanism (in the sense of a modern, nontheistic, rationalistic viewpoint that hold that man is capable of self-fulfillment, ethical conduct, etc., without recourse to supernaturalism) and technology.

2. *Liminal phenomena* tend to be collective, concerned with calendrical, biological, social-structural rhythms or with crises in social processes whether these result from internal adjustments or external adaptations or remedial measures. Thus they appear at what may be called 'natural breaks', natural disjunctions in the flow of natural and social processes. They are therefore enforced by sociocultural 'necessity', but they contain *in nuce* 'freedom' and



the potentiality for the formation of new ideas, symbols, models, beliefs. *Liminoid phenomena* may be collective (and when they are so, are often directly derived from liminal antecedents) but are more characteristically individual products though they often have collective or 'mass' effects. They are not cyclical, but continuously generated, though in the times and places apart from work settings assigned to 'leisure' activities.

3. *Liminal phenomena* are centrally integrated into the total social process, forming with all its other aspects a complete whole, and representing its necessary negativity and subjunctionity. *Liminoid phenomena* develop apart from the central economic and political processes, along the margins, in the interfaces and interstices of central and servicing institutions—they are plural, fragmentary and experimental in character.

4. *Liminal phenomena* tend to confront investigators rather after the manner of Durkheim's 'collective representations', symbols having a common intellectual and emotional meaning for all the members of the group. They reflect, on probing, the history of the group, that is, its collective experience, over time. They differ from preliminal or postliminal collective representations in that they are often reversals, inversions, disguises, negations, antitheses of quotidian, 'positive' or 'profane' collective representations. But they share their mass, collective character. *Liminoid phenomena* tend to be more idiosyncratic, quirky, to be generated by specific named individuals and in particular groups 'schools', 'circles' and 'coteries'—they have to compete with one another for general recognition and are thought of at first as ludic offerings placed for sale on the 'free' market—this is at least true of liminoid phenomena in nascent capitalistic and democratic-liberal societies. Their symbols are closer to the personal-psychological than to the 'objective-social' typological pole.

5. *Liminal phenomena* tend to be ultimately eufunctional, even when seemingly 'inversive' for the working of the social structure—ways of making it work without too much friction. *Liminoid phenomena*, on the other hand, are often parts of social critiques or even revolutionary manifestos—books, plays, paintings, films, etc., exposing the injustices, inefficiencies, and immoralities of the mainstream economic and political structures and organizations.

In complex, modern societies both types coexist in a sort of cultural pluralism. But the liminal—found in the activities of churches, sects and movements, in initiation rights of clubs, fraternities, masonic orders, and other secret societies, etc.—is no longer world wide. Nor are the liminoid phenomena which tend to be the leisure genres of art, sport, pastimes, games, etc., practised by and for particular groups, categories, segments, and sectors of large-scale industrial societies of all types. But for most people the liminoid is still felt to be freer than the liminal, a matter of choice, not obligation. The liminoid is more like a commodity—indeed, often is a commodity, which one selects and pays for—than the liminal, which elicits loyalty and is bound up



with one's membership or desired membership in some highly corporate groups. One *works* at the liminal, one *plays* with the liminoid. There may be much moral pressure to go to church or synagogue, whereas one queues up at the box office to see a play by Beckett, a show of Mort Sahl's, a Superbowl game, a symphony concert, or an art exhibition. And if one plays golf, goes yachting, or climbs mountains, one often needs to buy expensive equipment or pay for club membership. Of course, there are also all kinds of 'free' liminoid entertainments and performances—Mardi Gras, charivari, home entertainments of various kinds—but these already have something of the stamp of the liminal upon them, quite often they are the cultural debris of some forgotten liminal ritual. There are permanent 'liminoid' settings and spaces, too—bars, pubs, some cafés, social clubs, etc. But when clubs become exclusivist, they tend to generate rites of passage, with the liminal a condition of entrance into the liminoid realm.

I am frankly in the exploratory stage just now. (For instance, I am currently beginning, stimulated by Elihu Katz's work,<sup>2</sup> to look at media events as 'liminoid' phenomena.) I hope to make more precise these crude, almost medieval maps I have been unrolling of the obscure liminal and liminoid regions which lie around our comfortable village of the sociologically known, proven, tried and tested. Both 'liminal' and 'liminoid' mean studying symbols in social action, in praxis, not entirely at a safe remove from the full human condition. It means studying all domains of expressive culture, not the high culture alone nor the popular culture alone, the literate or the non-literate, the Great or the Little Tradition, the urban or the rural. Comparative symbology must learn how to 'embrace multitudes' and generate sound intellectual progeny from that embrace. It must study *total* social phenomena.<sup>7</sup>

### CONCLUSION

There seems to be today what one might call a growing 'need' for liminoid spaces and times. This may be partly satisfied by the renewal and regeneration of former liminoid channels, events, and genres, such as pilgrimage and other forms of motivated travel, and by the reconstruction of ethnicities, by various restorations of the past, mythical or historical. Museums seem to be becoming active centres for a kind of intercultural dialogue, through juxtaposing key symbols from different cultural traditions which summarize various aspects of the common human condition, and often incorporate live performance into their calendars by artists and actors drawn from these traditions. The youth of Western societies turn to aspects of Eastern religion as a liminoid antidote to their natal structure. Others are 'born again' from earlier stages of their own religious traditions. Folk religion or the 'Little Tradition' skillfully exploits the mass media, to provide a populist liminoid counterstroke to the complexities of the Great Tradition. In the States we think of Jerry Fallwell and other



'electronic preachers', usually extremely right wing in their politics.

The electronic media, particularly television, have added a new liminoid direction in our age. That is why the work of such researchers as Elihu Katz (1982) and his colleagues is of the utmost contemporary importance. Here we have a new, unprecedented, sociocultural reconstruction of 'reality' in terms of the 'media event', and, of course, 'reality' is often a liminoid fabrication, a selection of images and spectacles in accordance with covert criteria. Perhaps the distinction made by Jerzy Grotowski between active and passive culture is relevant here. Active culture is cultivated by a writer when writing a book, a director and actors when preparing performances, even an initiated performing a liminoid ritual. Passive culture is a relationship to what is a product of active culture, that is to say, reading, watching a play performed, film, TV, listening to music, watching sport. It is in active culture that one comes to be oneself, to be with someone, to be in relationship, I-and-Thou, as Buber wrote, and Stanislawski saw as the true goal of the actor—where acting is being, not just pretending. The media tend to promote and amplify passive culture. What this implies for the conferment of meaning, and as a mode of social control, and what are its further implications provide matter for further investigations.

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## LONG TIME AND SHORT TIME

### RITUAL AND NON-RITUAL LIMINALITY IN AN EAST-AFRICAN AGE SYSTEM

Uri Almagor

The absence of structure in the liminal state has two different aspects; both appear in Turner's writings, but they are not always clearly distinguished in the literature on liminality. One is the anti-structure element, or what Turner calls '... the potentially subversive character of liminality' (1978, p. 281); the other is related to the unstructured state of liminality which is not antithetical to everyday life but relates to situations which are 'at once destructured and prestructured' (Turner, 1967, p. 98), where the protagonists come into close contact with the '... unbounded, the infinite, the limitless' (1967, p. 98).

The anti-structure aspect is limited to the ritual sphere and Turner may be right in his assertion that any application of this kind of liminality beyond the ritual *rite de passage* structure would be purely metaphorical (1978, p. 286-87). Unstructured liminality, however, can be applied beyond the ritual sphere—in fact, it can be extended beyond the *rite de passage* structure, and thus can shed light on certain aspects of the behaviour of individuals in various situations that are neither ordered, prescribed, nor cases of extreme or pathological outbursts.

This essay will concentrate on unstructured liminality in both ritual and non-ritual spheres and will attempt to show how these two spheres are connected with two different concepts of time. More specifically, my concern here is not with how liminality helps in classifying time, but with temporal patterns of interaction between individuals and their regulation within the socio-temporal order. Both involve '... the structuring of social life by forcing activities into fairly rigid temporal patterns' (Zerubavel, 1918:XII).

An age system, which Legesse (1963) referred to as a 'Class system based on time', is an ideal case study for the present discussion as it rests on time-sequential recruitment to groups and hence differentiates various groups by age. Hence, the lives of age-group members are subject to a temporal order which regulates their entry into groups or grades, the time they spend in them,



and therefore individuals' structural location. However, individuals in such societies are also affiliated to various other types of groups and engage in a variety of relationships, each of which imposes its own schedule and behavioural patterns. The sequential order of events that individuals experience may differ from those regulated by the hierarchical structure of the age system.

In this context, examination of liminal situations and states can illuminate the incompatibilities encountered by age-group members, such as seniority based on age versus seniority based on generation, and the coexistence of equality and hierarchy (Almagor, 1978b). Such incompatibilities exist in every social system, but in a generation-set system (a complicated type of an age system) they stand out due to the fact that the two equally valid principles which determine a person's structural location—his genealogical affiliation, and his age—operate side by side in a single system. The first principle affiliates a person to a certain generation set according to his father's set affiliation, thus linking fathers, sons, grandsons, etc. in a hierarchically ordered chain. The second principle differentiates members of a generation set by age, so that coevals usually make up an age set. Large age differences in any given set is typical of a generation set system; as procreation is a continuous process, and polygyny commonplace, the age span of a man's progeny (all of whom belong to the same set) can span many years. Furthermore, since members of a given generation set need not be genealogically related, the difference in ages between the oldest and youngest members of one set is extended even further.

Three features deriving from the co-existence of these two principles are important to our discussion. First, the number of sets in the socially relevant sequence of seniority is usually fairly limited. Second, owing to the extended period of recruitment of members to generation sets, the senior set can remain in power for a relatively long time—usually several decades. Third, generation sets recruit members simultaneously and independently of one another,<sup>2</sup> resulting in considerable overlap in age across generation sets, in that men of similar age are affiliated to hierarchically distinct generation sets. Formally, the principle underlying generation set hierarchy is age seniority; in practice, however, there is very little age difference between the oldest members of any two adjacent sets, and such age differences are, in effect, self-perpetuating.

The most obvious aspect of liminality in such a system is the ritual transition of individuals from one stage in their lives to the next. The literature abounds with descriptions of ritual liminality in various ceremonies of transition. However, in most (if not all) East African age systems, young men undergo a period of disengagement during which, as we shall see, a young man enters a state of non-ritual liminality which can have a lasting—though usually latent—effect.

Ritual and non-ritual liminality will here be examined using the ethno-



logical date of the semi-pastoral Dassanetch, some 15,000 souls who reside in southwest Ethiopia and we shall distinguish between these two states of liminality by calling them 'long time' (*ram gayo*) and 'short time' (*ram gwo*). Let us turn first to the disengagement period that every youth must undergo.

### THE DISENGAGEMENT PERIOD

Dassanetch boys in their early teens disengage from their natal households to tend cattle and small-stock in camps located in the western pasturelands, away from settlements and base camps. The period of disengagement may last a decade or longer, and involves a gradual separation of a youth from a youth's ties with his natal household, while at the same time providing him with a new frame of reference through which he can enter into new kinds of relationships with his coevals and acquire an independent personal and social identity.

During this disengagement period youths share common experiences as they cooperate in performing chores in the livestock camps. They act independently and emphasize group solidarity, equality, and reciprocity. The very fact of belonging to a collective band of youngsters whose conceptual mould is one of solidarity and cooperation gives cultural meaning to this stage in life and stresses the importance of relative age. In a sense this amounts to introducing a type of informal age-grade which does not fit in with specific formal sets in a system that lacks properly-delineated age grades.

Elsewhere (Almagor, 1984) I have discussed this period of disengagement from the viewpoint of control over the flow of resources in a society that compels each individual (and, by extension, every successive generation) to establish new ties of his own. I have argued that the ideology of such 'newness' in the creation of social ties is well expressed in a generation-set system where the line of continuity between father and son is severed by their belonging to different social categories. The fact that power in the generation-set system is not transmitted directly from fathers to their biological sons, and that the transfer of hereditary assets from one generation to the next takes place early in one's life (i.e. at birth) means that opposing interests can be expressed in different social categories in the age system, and in spatially different locations (i.e., neolocal residence), for which the period of disengagement is a necessary precondition.

The status of these young men is in a way suspended between two formal categories; they have left their natal households, but have not yet established households of their own. Referring to this state as 'liminal' implies not only an interim passage in the life of an individual, it is rather a substantive shift from one state of social reality into another, unstructured one. The latter social reality is often described in structural terms of 'nature' as 'outside society' or as 'association with the bush', both of which are conceived as diametrically opposed to 'culture' and routine life. The Dassanetch, too, refer to this social



reality as *foritch*, alluding to three aspects at once: a location of pasturelands, temporary campsites, and the kind of livestock (usually those subsisting on dry grazing) herded there—all of which stand in contrast to milch stock which remain close to the social centers of permanent settlements.<sup>3</sup>

The exigencies of the pastoral productive system bring together young herders who are destined to be corporately affiliated to segregated groups. But before separating, they can strike enduring friendships. Their common experiences and their alliances, re-alliances, and shared hardships favours the creation of abiding ties. The temporal regulation in the *foritch* camps is determined by the needs and sequence of livestock grazing, and is controlled by elders. But the young herders have ample opportunity to evade the elders. Furthermore, the range of activities in which the young men are voluntarily and freely engaged, gives them sufficient leisure to socialize. The growth of attachments among the young herders helps them create a united front that is deliberately shut off from elders so as to prevent their interfering in *foritch* affairs and regulating it.

What is more relevant to our present subject is the norms of behaviour and the kind of social relationships that prevail in this distinct social and geographical sphere of *foritch*. The Dassanetch state quite explicitly that everyday rules and norms are suspended in *foritch*. In the first place, the absence of economic differentiation between the young herders in the camps, the shared physical conditions and the lack of importance of one's kin group or generation set (all of which are, in effect, completely ignored) render *foritch* totally different from and free of the structural boundaries and economic relations that mark the elders' social norms. Indeed, young men refer to *foritch* as *lakha*, i.e., 'different' or 'of another sort'. When these young men convene to discuss solutions to a problem they often say: '*hela foritch badiet*'—'this is *foritch*—it is outside,' i.e., the familiar rules and norms do not always apply.

This suspension of the rules manifests itself in a variety of ways. While these cannot be described in full here, several examples should suffice to illustrate the point. Youngsters in *foritch* do not marry, but the rules of endogamy and exogamy governing normal marital relations do not apply when they court, dance with, and occasionally make love to girls who sometimes join their pastoral activities. The many taboos that apply to bond partners or affines and their families are often ignored in *foritch*. A third example relates to eating meat: although young men often try to imitate their elders, they dispense with the ritual procedures, generation set seniority rules and the careful selection of particular cuts of meat that elders observe so scrupulously. Furthermore, although the youths cluster in cliques of 10–15 men belonging to the same generation set, participation in most of their social events is open to age peers from any number of cliques; most notably—participation in raids on neighbouring tribes in which they kill enemies, abduct girls, and loot stock.



The license granted in raid, for example, is called *sariti*. This is a chaotic 'free-for-all' in which the behaviour of the participants is no longer governed by rules and regulations, and everyone is free to kill, grab, scream, and generally run riot. Some aspects of *sariti*, though somewhat modified, also occur in other circumstances, such as in extended periods of meat feasting, slaughtering a name-ox, and courtship.<sup>4</sup> What is of interest to us in the present context is the composition of the participants, men who would otherwise hardly ever have occasion to co-mingle—much less collaborate.

When asked, the Dassanetch describe a certain event that took place in the *foritch* in terms of its cast of characters. They sometimes answer questions about one particular event by referring to another, simply because they wish to recall the name of someone who participated in both events. They are often unable to remember which event preceded the other, or whether they occurred simultaneously

The meaning that these events acquire through the subjective evaluation of the variously connected participants or onlookers takes on a reality of its own. However, the totality of events that took place in the *foritch*, say, within one particular decade, are never arranged in a temporal sequence. Nor can they be—for there is no simple connection between the occurrence of an event in time (and those participating in it) which can be structurally and hierarchically fitted into the age and time sequences of the generation-set system. In other words, the participants can be of various ages and be affiliated to different cliques and generation sets, and thus defy any attempt to arrange *foritch* events in a temporal sequence which is based on the age system.

To illustrate, I must resort to an analogy borrowed from Newton-Smith (1980:19) who portrays time-related events as coloured beads strung on a wire; the wire represents chronological time and the beads are the events. If, as we have noted, there is no connection between people's structural affiliation and events in time, then, following this analogy, we might instead think of beads that are scattered around the wire in clusters and rows—yet nonetheless belonging to the same strand of time because they represent events happening to people who are in the same stage in life.

After spending a prolonged period of disengagement in the *foritch* camps, the men return to the settlement, undergo circumcision, marry (in their late twenties or early thirties) and establish independent households. The household, composed of a man, his wife (or wives) and their unmarried children, is the basic unit of production and consumption. The household—first that of a man's father and later a man's own—forms a rights-holding unit whose male members have rights in the household herd. When a boy is born, his father presents him with a cow and several head of young, female small stock which serve as the nucleus of his future herd. The boy retains his rights in these beasts and as he grows up so does his herd increase. Upon marriage, a man



withdraws from the household herd all the livestock to which he has claim, leaves his father's household, and establishes one of his own in a neolocal residence of his choice. He then enters into intensive economic activity and undertakes new responsibilities; gradually grows distant from the agemates he associated with in his youth, and eventually retires into social elderhood in one of the permanent settlements.

### 'SHORT-TIME' LIMINALITY

I first encountered the term 'short time' when I observed two Dassanetch elders, from different generation sets, sitting in front of a hut, apparently enjoying themselves enormously. They were exchanging jokes, laughing, and completely indifferent to their surroundings. When I asked what they were doing I was told 'they had a short time'. Since the past tense was used, I first thought that my inadequate knowledge of the Dassanetch language had caused me to misunderstand the answer, but this was not the case.

The Dassanetch draw a fundamental distinction between 'a short time' and 'a long time'. With respect to pastoralism, for example, the first refers to several days and the second to several months; in the context of social interaction, however, the first applies to situations that have a clear beginning and end, whereas the second is reserved for situations whose end is indeterminate, irrespective of the absolute temporal span. In the second instance, although the length of time as such is also important, it is secondary to the nature of relations between two people. The 'short' term is employed in connection with reciprocal relations whose nature and duration can be predicted, where a series of fairly rapid transactions, can be envisaged. 'Long', on the other hand, implies relations whose reciprocity is not immediately apparent, and not always predictable.

Dassanetch, not unlike Biblical Hebrew,<sup>5</sup> employs the past tense for a 'short time' and the future tense for a 'long time', without regard for the chronology of the events or grammatical adjustment to the view of the speaker. Thus, the past tense used to describe the 'short time' episode of the elders indicated a completed, closed state of reciprocity that prevailed in the past, and evoked in the present.

The two elders whom I had observed had shared several experiences during their period of disengagement. They spent the whole day chatting, laughing, eating and drinking, and reminiscing. I found out that such 'short time' meetings were fairly commonplace; they normally included more than only two friends, but were always held by a group of people who had shared a common experience in the past and not shared by others.

In the dichotomy of 'ritual and play' (Handelman, 1977b) 'short time' episodes are closer to play: they involve *ludic* elements, are uninhibited, and unproductive, and while the actors are aware of, and refer to, another reality,



the whole episode is governed by rules (Caillois, 1961).<sup>6</sup> However, people do not indulge in 'short time' reminiscing every time they happen to meet. In a small society such as that of the Dassanetch, any two elders probably have occasion to interact and co-operate in any number of spheres; when they do indulge in 'short time' play, every once in a while, it is usually when one elder happens to evoke in the other a reaction that ultimately spirals into a 'short time' lapse. 'Short time' is not a rare reunion of long-parted old friends, which would almost automatically raise old memories and provide the setting for indulgence in 'short time' liminality. Rather, 'short time' is initiated by specific signals—or rather, codes—relating to the shared experience of past events. These are almost always expressed by adopting an exaggerated form of either action or speech, indicating mutual desire to briefly disengage from routine activities. Note, however, that although these exaggerated codes (especially those of the initiator) are an unmistakable invitation to enter into a liminal state, they can also be refused.

The disengagement period is 'liminal' in the broadest sense of the word, for it is a state, a space, and a temporal transition, where absence of rules and unstructured relations prevail. However, and more specifically, events, episodes and processes acquire a subjective meaning only through the persons who experience them. It is these persons who become associated with such events and can thus be referred to as 'liminal personae' (Turner, 1969, p. 95) who occasionally revert back to these early shared experiences later on in their social interactions, after becoming socially and economically differentiated.

This differentiation develops gradually through exchange relations, investments, and manipulations that result in the accumulation of brokerage power. 'Short time' meetings give elders an opportunity to escape the binding routine formulae imposed by everyday life and relive the spirit of reciprocity, equality, solidarity, trust, and loyalty of their period of disengagement. The old egalitarian relationship is fleetingly restored by bringing back memories which always remain fresh and cannot be eroded in a system organized on a timetable which regards as irrelevant events that are not milestones in generation-set development.

Liminal personae, events, and their social connotations all combine to form an infrastructure that abides in an individual's post-marital life and elderhood. As Durkheim (1965, p. 22) has noted, 'Portions of our past become present again, though being clearly distinguished from the present' in a kind of *bricolage* of time. For it takes the same elements of events in time, people, and processes, in various combinations. Reverting to the model of the beads—it is the form, the colour, and the shape of the beads which is open to re-interpretation.

People can thus 'play' with time—going backward and forward in spontaneous 'time-out' situations. This is particularly important in a system based



on time. By referring to another time, an alternative 'non-time' dimension is invoked, through which people can bypass the content of routine interaction which is regulated, in one way or another, by the chronological time structure of the age system. This is evident in the 'short term' interludes shared by people who are in most other respects keen competitors and who differ in economic status, social position, and political affiliation. In a society where the social standing of individuals is in a constant state of flux according to the changing image of their social credit,<sup>7</sup> the 'short time' meetings provide a legitimate social forum for elders to gossip in freely and exchange information (Handelman, 1977a; Paine, 1967, 1968). Above all, these meetings provide a forum for a type of social interaction that differs from those prescribed for agnates, affines, clique age-peers, or members of the same generation set. First, unlike the structured relations that develop within any unit in the age system and impose certain patterns of behaviour, 'short time' episodes are deliberately unstructured, in imitation of the unlicensed liminality of the past. Second, most of a man's long-term relations affiliate him to bounded groups of persons through contractual bonds and alliances which place him in a clearly defined structural location; on the other hand, the infrastructure of 'liminal personae' is unbounded—it is a wide network of people from different structural affiliations. Any two or more elders indulging in 'short time' separate themselves from 'outsiders', which can include even their closest relations. Finally, differences of seniority, brokerage power, and social credit are all suspended during 'short time' meetings.

Although these meetings may be brief in duration, they are 'deep' in that people encounter one another in a relationship of *communitas*; they immerse themselves in memories of another time in a sort of communion of spirit rather than acting in their status roles or generation set memberships which place them in some form of structural opposition.

#### 'LONG-TIME' LIMINALITY

Age systems are often treated in the literature as a chronological table, as a device to indicate the passage of time in equal, measurable units that mark a sequence of social events. It is therefore no wonder that the age system has been regarded as a major principle of organization dividing people according to their stage in life and thus determining their patterns of behaviour and generating the regulation of their social and economic progress.

As I have pointed out elsewhere,<sup>8</sup> this is not an accurate description of the age system. True, the age system does create temporal boundaries, but since social units in the system recruit members simultaneously, and as most activities and events in one unit parallel those in the others, the age system can hardly be seen as a single-strand temporal sequence. Rather, it seems to represent a sort of implicit matrix that is frequently and manifestly incompat-



ible with the life course of its members. Obviously, the diverse activities of people in different spheres tend to drive a wedge between the temporal order in which they progress and the formal stages dictated by the age system. The two most obvious incompatibilities are: (a) the discrepancy between seniority based on affiliation to a generation set versus individuals' chronological age, and (b) the discrepancy between a person's age and his brokerage power and social credit. While neither of these plays any role in the disengagement period, where the only relevant dimension is that of age, they become manifest later on, when youths first become heads of independent households and then elders.

In an age system, relative age is an indispensable yardstick of social standing, wealth, and brokerage power. However, as social relationships are woven out of a great many different strands resulting in the social and economic differentiation between individuals, a person's relative age often cannot serve as the single criterion for his social standing, nor can the number of stock and other 'objective' measures of material wealth. More than anything else, a person's social standing depends on the quality and quantity of the social ties in which he is involved—most of which are seldom activated and, if they are, never simultaneously. Thus, a person's merit is judged more by the *image* he projects of one who controls a broad network of social ties, of being able to grant access to resources, and so forth, rather than by his tangible assets. This is so because a man's material wealth (primarily the size of his herd) is only a means towards achieving social prominence through the skilful deployment and distribution of resources designed to widen and deepen social relationships. A person's social 'rating' is therefore constantly being re-assessed according to clues gleaned from the range, order, intensity, and duration of his visits, meetings, and cooperation with others. Here, relative age is quite immaterial; persons of the same age, or the same structural position in the age system, are differentiated according to the social credit ascribed to them.

It is nonetheless revealing that all the differences between individuals' social networks, credit, and brokerage power, as well as the constant re-assessment of their social standing, are not regarded as independent criteria, nor is there any verbal means of describing these differences other than by the principles of age and generation, which are expressed by using the 'short' and 'long' terms. More specifically, the short-term, as noted, stands for reciprocal and equal relations that develop among coevals during the disengagement period and is extended to a later stage by ignoring the differences between them. The long-term refers mainly to the hierarchical relations between units in the age system, and especially to alternate generation sets that form and extend the line of continuity. Here, the emphasis is not so much on the political hierarchy of generation sets but rather on the line of continuity which places a person's



children in a junior generation set. The necessary condition for such continuity to persist is obviously marriage and procreation. Indeed, the four major ceremonies that an individual undergoes in the course of his life are divided into two pairs, where each pair is connected not only through a common symbolic theme but also in that they represent the beginning and end of a process centered around marriage, fertility, and self-fulfilment.

The first pair consists of the circumcision and *dimi* ceremonies. Dassanetch men are circumcised relatively late in their life cycle (in their late twenties or early thirties), around the time they first marry. Although circumcision is a collective ceremony performed within the framework of the generation-set system, the *raison d'être* of the ceremony is the future fertility of the individual being circumcised; it is not a passage into another grade nor is it a precondition for marriage or entrance into a senior sect. The *dimi* ceremony is an annual event performed for all men who fathered some 8–10 years earlier. The formal purpose of the ceremony is to bless daughters for marriage and future fertility, but it also celebrates her father whose earlier blessing, at the time of his circumcision, is seen to have borne fruit. Also, the father is able, in this ceremony (which lasts about six weeks) to lay the groundwork for future affinal relationships through his nubile daughter or daughters.

The second pair of ceremonies is marriage and *gol*. The time lapse between these two ceremonies may be 20 or 30 years, but they are nevertheless closely connected since they are regarded by the Dassanetch as the beginning and end of a single event: marriage. Like circumcision, the marriage ceremony is performed within the framework of the generation-set system; the main participants are the bridegroom's fellow generation-set members. The marriage ceremony is referred to as the 'opening' of marriage, symbolically expressed in the main ritual in which the bride's metal anklets are opened.<sup>9</sup> Bridewealth transfers among the Dassanetch commence only after marriage, and is a protracted process that can span 20 or 30 years. The annual allocation of livestock to selected bride-givers enables a man to strengthen specific affinal ties and at the same time engage in other stock transactions leading to the creation of new social ties.

The *gol* ceremony celebrates the completion of bridewealth transfers.<sup>10</sup> The performance of this ceremony, the Dassanetch say, is intended 'to build a house for the wife', and one of the rituals centers on building a new hut for the couple. However, in daily use they refer to this ceremony as 'closing' the marriage—i.e. 'sealing' it after a long period in which bride-givers and bride-receivers co-operated closely in many spheres and virtually acted as a consolidated group.

The rituals in all four ceremonies contain selected and known symbolic elements which emphasize either a process that the individual undergoes from blessing to fulfilment, or elements in his behaviour as the head of an indepen-



dent household. I have elaborated on these issues elsewhere (Almagor, 1978a, 1983c, 1986, and will therefore note here, in brief, that these include the use of the same beads and cloth, use of complementary symbolic objects (colours, rods, fire, and feathers) that underlie the connection between the rituals of each pair of ceremonies as a beginning and an end. Also, these ceremonies include rituals related to the symbolic opposition between moieties which convey messages about competition, co-operation, reciprocity, and exchange—which are the basic principles of a man's new relationships when he moves out of one reality (the disengagement period) into another, one of intense economic activity and new responsibilities as the head of an independent household.

All these are regulated collective ceremonies, and the connection between the first of each pair (i.e., circumcision and marriage) and the generation-set system framework is stronger than the connection between the second in each pair (i.e., *dimi* and *gol*). Yet, these are *rites de passage* of individuals; they do not celebrate a collective group graduation to a higher grade in the age system. The emphasis here is on the individual who achieves his rights to marriage, procreation and the establishment of an independent household, irrespective of his structural location in the generation-set system and of power changes in it. It is the inevitable progress of an individual through stages in his life course, in a system that advances slowly and is characteristic of infrequent power changes, that is brought to the fore in these ceremonies. None of these ceremonies establishes a collective identity for its participants, nor do they establish a basis for formal or informal ties between the celebrants in a later stage.

The 'long time' element with which these ceremonies are associated stems from the theme of social continuity of generation sets inherent in the fulfilment of blessings in the first ceremonies, the time it takes for such fulfilment to bear fruit, and the consequent development of personal ties, affinal relations, and widening networks. Although almost every Dassanetch man undergoes these series of ceremonies, no one can predict the range and quality of ties, nor the nature of mediatory position and reciprocal relations to which marriage and procreation will lead in the future.

It is worth noting how the liminality of these ceremonies differs from 'short time' liminality. Both are firmly grounded in reality and are in no way antithetical to routine and everyday life. In this sense, they are more unstructured than anti-structural. While 'short time' liminality, as noted, is closer to the notion of 'play', the 'long time' liminality of these ceremonies represents more the ritual side of the ritual-play dichotomy. The ceremonies follow prescribed rules, and have little *ludic* content. The structure of their ritual and symbolism is connected with social transition and is essentially the one which van Gennep (1960) described for the life crises of the individual.



At this point one may argue that, after all, 'short time' meetings may also be a form of ritualized liminality. But although there may be an element of ritualism in these meetings, they differ substantially from *rite de passage* liminality as they are spread out over time and space and are quite spontaneous. They function more as a potential network of liminal enclaves in a structured system than as milestones in the course of an individual's life-cycle.

The ritual liminality of *rite de passage* is a non-recurrent, 'out of time' event in a one-way linear progression that also establishes a means of measuring time, and the relationship between such events has a clear historical dimension. Playing with (or rather, manipulating) time is almost impossible. For what happened in the past determines to a large extent what will happen in the future. The re-interpretation of a past event through a conceptual shift for the purpose of action in the present is almost inconceivable. Non-ritual liminality, on the other hand, is a 'time-out' situation in which time itself is irrelevant; the reality to which it refers is the unrelated events in the *foritch*, which occur at discontinuous points in time. The revival of the spirit of equality and reciprocity during the period of disengagement does not, nor is it intended to create correct images of the past. The memories of intense personal experiences which were associated with the lack of boundaries provides a flexible framework for re-interpretation.

The ritual framework of 'long time' liminality emphasizes the notion of social development associated with age by replicating social processes, thereby highlighting the incompatibilities inherent in the age system between relative age and affiliation to a generation-set. 'Short time' liminality, on the other hand, judges social order as it was, or rather—as it should be. For the dispersal of timeless liminal events throughout the social order is a constant means of structural assertion. They bring to the fore real-life inconsistencies and incompatibilities—between the principles of seniority and equality among coevals—and therefore accentuate the deeper principles which underlie this reality.

### CONCLUSION

The foregoing analysis raises three issues related to the role of liminality in society in general and in age systems in particular. The first concerns the connection between liminality and the construction of trust in society. It has been shown that the disengagement period establishes a reservoir of trust in society. It is worth noting that the disengagement period renders the dissociation of youths from existing patterns of trust which prevail in his natal household. This accords with Eisenstadt's thesis (1956) on the necessity for a young man to detach himself from familial patterns of trust in order to be able to enter into other kinds of relationships and commitments.<sup>11</sup> The fact that the restructuring of trust takes place 'outside' society—in the *foritch*—and that it



centres on events characterized by the absence of rules—is of crucial importance. The nature of trust established under conditions of equality and reciprocity in the camps, and the liberated feelings fostered during participation in the various events is enormously powerful emotionally. It integrates private experience with a collective reality in a context of freedom and happiness, all associated with lack of internal divisions. The various events, each with different participants, extend the basis of trust well beyond the small bounded groups of age-peers and create a network of trust which accompanies the individual for the rest of his life.

The high level of trust established in a liminal period is particularly important in a generation set system such as that of the Dassanetch, where fathers and sons belong to different, sometimes opposed social categories and where newly wed men who establish neolocal households are immersed in exchange relations and competition to acquire scarce bonds and affinal ties. The dispersal of pockets of trust fulfils an important function in economic and social differentiation.

The liminal 'short time' meetings provide a non-ritual framework for the expression of trust which remains viable over the years. This for two reasons: first, the meetings are flexible rather than ritually rigid in form and content. They combine a re-interpretation of past events with current gossip and exchange of information in a setting of leisure and play. Secondly, since the 'short time' meetings are themselves liminal situations, there are no references to, or requests for the resources which the participant individuals control. Furthermore, there is no obligation to enter into a 'short time' meeting. All these endow 'short time' meetings with an element of reliability, credibility, and confidence. The degree to which an elder and his coevals will go on being tied to each other and participate in these 'short time' meetings depends on the confidence and trust they have in each other, not to exploit these meetings for personal gain. Yet the 'short time' meetings may serve as a potential basis for later interaction, for they provide channels of access between people divided by various affiliations and by mitigating rivalries and other forms of personal friction.

The second issue which this paper raises concerns the nature of liminality as a category which stands for social transition. Generally speaking, the liminality of the *rite de passage* is a transition, a betwixt and between situation, between two structural situations in the social order, whether it is individuals who move from one status to another, or an entire group that is transferred from one grade or level to another. This essay has explored, in both the ritual liminality of ceremonies and non-ritual liminality of the 'short time' interludes, a different kind of liminality, representing a more diffuse effort of the cultural system to deal not with transition between structural situations but between contradictions in the social system itself.



Both ritual and non-ritual situations of liminality are statements about the contradiction of principles which emerge in a later stage of the individuals' lives and whose continuous effects they have to live. These are the contradictions between equality and prominence, and between coequality and competition, which are expressed in the non-ritual liminality of the 'short time' episodes. On the other hand, the discrepancy between seniority based on affiliation to a generation set and an individual's relative age; a person's chronological age and his social position; and fertility and brokerage power, are all accommodated in the ritual liminality of the 'long time' ceremonies. A man who undergoes the ceremonies, though he may gain a certain amount of prestige, does not affect his status, his role in society, nor does the ceremony bring out—apart from incompatibilities in the individual's life which even a 'long time' investment cannot necessarily resolve—that these principles continuously exist and are not clearly demarcated. It is therefore possible that this kind of unstructured liminality, either in the ritual form of an uncertain 'long time' transition or in the form of dispersed 'short time' interludes, is connected with the continuous reactivation of contradictory principles which the social system cannot resolve. Unlike the anti-structure state of liminality, unstructured liminality can be invoked as often as necessary. Its frequent invocation alerts the people to the contradictory and boundless principles which are reiterated in their social lives.

The third issue discussed in this essay is the different notions of time which provide another dimension for the analysis of the incompatibilities in individuals' lives. Three different notions of time were introduced: 'regular' time on which the age system is based; 'long time', and 'short time'. The latter two were related to liminality, centred on the life cycle of the individual and his social relationships. The first, on the other hand, centres on the generation-set system whose units are also considered as temporal units, and where the distance between such units has a calendrical dimension.

The generation-set system defines individuals' structural location, and although the flow of time brings with it changes of power, upward movement, and consequently changes in the relative positions of the different sets, such changes actually occur very infrequently. This state of slow changes can be referred to as 'stagnation'; so much so, that the individual's life course is 'faster' than and incompatible with the course regulated by the generation-set system.

The 'long time' ceremonies do not reflect the calendrical time dimension of the generation-set system but that of an individual's natural progression and achievement of rights irrespective of the slow changes in the generation-set system. The strain caused by the different rhythms of the generation-set system and that of individuals is further accentuated by the economic and social differentiation among individuals. The notion of 'short time' introduces 'time-



'out' interludes as an alternative time dimension that enables individuals to mitigate these strains by a liminal suspension of the differences between them. Although the sentiments and memories of these 'time out' episodes belong to another period, the alternative commitment to equality and reciprocity persists in the form of an infrastructure that accompanies individuals throughout their adult lives. The importance of the 'short time' episodes lies in the fact that in a system based on time, individuals have the option to deal with uncertainties and incompatibilities created by 'regular' and 'long' times, which stand against social control and the limitations of routine life.

These three issues are inherently connected. Each points to a different angle from which the association of incompatibilities in the social system with unstructured liminality can be tackled. The question that merits further inquiry in other systems is—in what way are those contradictions in the social system that cannot be resolved associated with different forms of liminality? In this particular case of a generation-set system, it has been shown that the association derives from the ability of the system to handle differences between individuals of different ages relatively successfully, but not to provide effective means to solve problems arising from differences between coevals.

#### NOTES

- 1 I wish to thank S. Falk-Moore, D. Handelman, and E. Zerubavel, who read an earlier draft of this essay, and S. N. Eisenstadt and V. W. Turner, in whose seminar on 'Comparative Liminality' it was presented, for their valuable comments.
- 2 Termination of recruitment among the Dassanetch is determined by the number of circumcision ceremonies performed by each set. Each generation set holds its own series of ceremonies independently. For more details see Almagor (1983a).
- 3 Many wild fruit are associated with young herders in the *foritch* who are also the only ones who eat them.
- 4 For more details on *sariti* outbursts see Almagor (1983b).
- 5 Cf. Wilson (1954).
- 6 There is an interesting paradox here. Not only is play among elders not considered morally reprehensible—elders in their 'short time' meeting apotheosize their own unbridled behaviour when they were in the *foritch*; but at the same time they accuse those young men currently in the *foritch* of neglecting their duties as herders and wishing only to play. Above all, they condemn the behaviour of these young men as wild and irresponsible. For more details see Almagor (1983a).
- 7 For additional details see Almagor (1978a: Ch. X).
- 8 See Almagor (1978a, 1978b, 1983a).
- 9 For more details on the marriage ceremony and its symbolism see Almagor (forthcoming).
- 10 Not everyone can celebrate *gol*; there are many customary restrictions which prevent most men from undergoing this ceremony even if they have completed the allocation of bridewealth. For additional details see Almagor (1978a: ch. IX).
- 11 For a comprehensive analysis of the reconstruction of trust in society see Eisenstadt and Roniger (forthcoming).



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# THE ETHIOPIAN HOLY MAN AS OUTSIDER AND ANGEL

Steven Kaplan

Ethiopian monasticism traces its origins to the end of the 5th century and the arrival of two groups of monks from Syria. The impact of their activities on the understaffed and underresourced church of the period can scarcely be overestimated.<sup>1</sup> Yet, despite the crucial role played by these foreign missionaries, teachers and translators, it was not until the end of the 13th century that the monastic ideals and institutions they represented became the dominant force in Ethiopian Christianity. Only in the early Solomonic period (1270-1527) do we witness the rise of the monastic holy man to a central position in Christian life and belief.<sup>2</sup>

I have introduced the expression 'holy man' alongside the more commonly used term 'saint' not only to associate this paper with similar studies, the outstanding example of which is Peter Brown's 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity',<sup>3</sup> but also to clarify a number of points concerning its subject matter. First it must be stressed that it is my intention to discuss the image and activities of the holy man during his own lifetime. The veneration of and competition for saintly relics, prayers at grave sites, and posthumous miracles were all important elements of Ethiopian religious life during the early Solomonic period, but they are not of immediate concern to me in this paper. Neither will this essay include a treatment of the non-Ethiopian saints commemorated by the Ethiopian Church. Accordingly, while the expression saint has been used at numerous points it should always be understood to refer to a living Ethiopian holy man.

In a similar fashion while the holy men have been referred to as 'monks' or 'monastic leaders' at various points, it has not been my intention to present a study of Ethiopian monasticism *per se*. In so far as all of the holy men were monks and generally monastic leaders, the consideration of some of the institutions of Ethiopian monasticism has inevitably formed a portion of this paper. However, it must be stressed that while the holy men were all monks, all monks were not holy men. The ill and lame, incompetent and unlucky were all well represented in Ethiopia's monasteries. The exalted figures who are the subject of this paper represent only a small, far from typical portion of the many people who assumed the monastic garb. All the generalizations I shall



present should be considered with this fact in mind.

Despite a growing recognition of the crucial role played by the monastic holy men in Ethiopian society, existing publications have made only sporadic attempts to chronicle their activities.<sup>4</sup> In this paper, I shall attempt to analyze one aspect of the symbolism surrounding the holy man which appears of some relevance to the concerns of this seminar: his image as outsider.

In his article 'Passages, margins, and poverty: religious symbols of communitas' Professor Victor Turner distinguishes three aspects of culture which are 'exceptionally well endowed with ritual symbols and beliefs of a non-social-structural type: liminality, outsiderhood, and structural inferiority.'<sup>5</sup> On outsiderhood he writes, 'the state of outsiderhood refers to the condition of being either permanently and by ascription set outside the structural arrangements of a given social system, or being situationally or temporarily set apart or voluntarily set apart.'<sup>6</sup> It is in this last sense 'voluntarily set apart' that the holy man was an outsider.

Although born in a specific region to a family with a variety of alliances and loyalties, the holy man could, preliminary to and in the process of becoming a monk, strip himself of his inherited social identity and be reborn as a new social being. As an individual he had belonged to a specific class and region; as a monk and ascetic he voluntarily set himself apart from the behaviour of status-occupying, rôle-playing members of society. It is upon this process of becoming an outsider and its social-religious implications that I shall focus here. I begin however, with some general comments concerning Christian Ethiopia and the rise of the Holy Man.

### *THE RISE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE HOLY MAN*

The period with which I am concerned is known as the early Solomonic period in Ethiopian History. The so-called restoration of the so-called Solomonic dynasty in 1270 marked the beginning of two centuries of dramatic Christian expansion across the Ethiopian highlands.<sup>7</sup>

Each of the monastic movements which arose during this period represented an attempt by regional groups to oppose the encroachment of the Solomonic kings on traditional rights and privileges. As the kings expanded their domain and reduced local rulers to vassal status, members of these local noble families abandoned the political arena and took up the monastic life. Although Ethiopia's monasteries had probably served as refuges or prisons for political failures and malcontents prior to this period, the changing political conditions of the time dramatically increased the numbers of those assuming the monastic garb.

Although the different monastic movements differed significantly in the time and locale of their development, and each had its own distinctive ritual practice and theological tenets, all four were characterized by an initial period



of anti-monarchical activity during which their members defied and denied the authority of the Solomonic kings.

It was Shāwa province which first came under Solomonic domination and it was here too that we witness the earliest development of a new militant monastic movement. The rebel clerics of Shāwa, and to a lesser extent Amhara, refused royal gifts, denounced royal polygamy, and denied royal jurisdiction over the monasteries. The flowering of monasticism in this southern province is all the more noteworthy in light of the fact that monasticism appears to have been brought to the region only in the second half of the 13th century. The second of the monastic movements, that named for the 14th century holy man Ēwostatēwos, flourished in the northern province of Tegrē, the site of Ethiopia's oldest monastic institutions. The Ēwostatian movement championed traditional Ethiopian religious practices such as the Saturday Sabbath in opposition to the dictates of the Solomonic kings and the Egyptian bishops.<sup>8</sup> The development of monasticism among the Bētā Esra'el (Fālasha) was closely associated with their loss of political autonomy following their conquest by the Emperor Yeshaq at the beginning of the 15th century. So successful were these 'Ethiopian Jews' in their adoption of the Christian institution of monasticism that Fālasha religious life not only survived their political decline but appears to have even enjoyed a 'golden age' during which important religious texts were either composed or adapted from Christian literature.<sup>9</sup> Finally, towards the end of the period with which we are concerned, there arose once again in northern Ethiopia, the Stephanite movement. Members of this 'heretical' monastic movement founded by Abba Estifanos were distinguished by their alleged refusal to bow before Mary or the cross. However their religious practices were, to a considerable extent, symptomatic of their opposition to royal domination of the church, especially during the reign of the powerful emperor Zāra Ya'eqob.<sup>10</sup>

Throughout the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries the leadership of Ethiopia's monasteries was drawn from the ranks of the wealthy and honoured.

When functioning in the role of monastic leader (abbot) the monastic holy men of Ethiopia remained essentially faithful to the noble tradition from which they had emerged.<sup>11</sup> The monastic leader, like a local chief or noble, was responsible for a community of his financial and spiritual dependents. As the holder of a respected and honoured position, that of abbot, the holy man was an active participant in the monastic succession process. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the monastic leaders also emerged as major landowners, controlling large resources and administering sizeable incomes. Like their noble precursors, the monastic leaders took an active interest in politics including the rise and fall of the princes and kings in the royal court. Finally, although they had no troops to provide, the holy men were deeply involved in the numerous wars and battles of the early Solomonic period



through predictions, prayers, blessings and exhortation which they provided before, during, and after a military campaign.

These functions notwithstanding, it would be a major mistake to view the monastic holy man as nothing more than a noble in monk's clothing. Although many of the functions and responsibilities of the holy man paralleled those performed by local rulers, he also engaged in a variety of activities unfamiliar to local chiefs, such as healing and exorcism. Moreover, by virtue of his monastic vocation and ascetic life style, the holy man was able to fill a vital mediative role in Ethiopian society. From a position outside and somewhat above normal human society he offered the possibility of just and unbiased judgments to parties in dispute. A few examples will suffice to illustrate the point:

The 15th century saint Abba Yafqerännä Egzi' intervened on a number of occasions in domestic disputes. In one case, a layman quarrelled with his wife, a beautiful woman known for her hospitality. The man went to the saint, who revealed his foreknowledge of the situation, and induced him to repent.<sup>12</sup> In another instance, a governor who wished to leave his wife and marry another woman was admonished by the same saint. He disobeyed and was struck down by the angel of death.<sup>13</sup>

A man who lived near Abba Anorēwos had his corn stolen by one of his neighbours. The saint went to the thief and requested a 'gift' of corn from him. When he received this gift, he returned the stolen portion to its rightful owner and kept the rest as his 'fee'.<sup>14</sup> Saint Märha Krestos appears to have played a similar role on the village level for one community called him 'the pillar of our village' and another referred to the saint as 'the just man of our village'.<sup>15</sup> When he died the army lamented his passing, crying out 'our father Märha Krestos is dead . . . who will make peace with the king for us from now on'.<sup>16</sup>

Such interventions by the holy man were probably far more frequent than a superficial examination of our texts would seem to indicate. Since the hagiographers were often not interested in recording the commonplace, those episodes which resulted in spectacular results or a miraculous event are most prominent in their texts. When the saint acted effectively and was speedily obeyed, the event was more often than not forgotten. Thus, 'the miracle story is often no more than a pointer to the many more occasions on which the holy man had already used his position in society'.<sup>17</sup> Several such miracle stories appear in the Ethiopian *gädlät* (hagiographies).

When Abba Zä-Yohannes was travelling in extreme northern Ethiopia, he came upon a man who claimed that his cow had been stolen by thieves. The alleged thieves denied they had stolen the cow, but the saint was able to prove their guilt through the testimony of the cow, which had already been slaughtered and cooked. The appeal to the holy man and his judicial role were



probably quite common, but the character of at least one of the witnesses was extraordinary.<sup>18</sup>

### THE MAKING OF THE HOLY MAN

The monastic holy man's ability to act as a mediator was to a considerable extent the result of the unique position he occupied in Ethiopian society. Both as a monk and as an ascetic the holy man expressed his rejection of the passing world of wealth, power and kinship. Rather, he sought to achieve a new and independent existence outside the customary rights and obligations of secular society. It is to the process of becoming an outsider that we now turn our attention.

As a number of scholars have noted the novitiate functioned as a *rite de passage* which concluded with the birth of a new man, the monk.<sup>19</sup> A number of the experiences undergone by a novice were similar to those endured by initiates in various rites. Upon entering the monastery, the prospective monk was deprived of important outward signs of his previous status. If he came from a wealthy family, as did many of the monks, he was deprived of his property.<sup>20</sup> Others, following the model of Saint Antony renounced their property and worldly goods prior to their departure from the secular world.<sup>21</sup>

The decision to assume a monastic vocation also frequently meant the suspension of kinship rights and obligations. Although some evidence exists in our sources for a practice of consigning younger sons to a monastery,<sup>22</sup> many young men entered the church against the wishes of their families. Thus Bäsälotä Mika'él was removed from a monastery by his relative King Wedem Ra'ad, and Abba Qäwestos had to overcome strong objections from his relatives in order to pursue his vocation.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps the finest example of this phenomenon is found in Gädälä Filmona.<sup>24</sup> When Filmona first left his family to join a monastery, local monks reported his arrival to his father, the governor of the region. Filmona's father travelled to the monastery where the monks greeted him warmly and returned his son. Not to be thwarted, Filmona waited only three weeks before fleeing to another more distant monastery, where he kept his identity a secret.

'And this teacher said to him, "O my son, Do you have a father and a mother and a family?" And he (Filmona) said to him, "My father, why do you ask me about my father and mother? . . . I have no father or mother but only the Lord, for I am a stranger and a pilgrim in this land."<sup>25</sup>

Thus entrance into a monastery *at times* required a denial of family: 'and they (the monks) said to him, we are afraid to take you with us because you look like the son of the governor of our region . . . And he (Märha Krestos) said, "I am not the son of the governor of that region, I am the servant of the ruler of all the world."<sup>26</sup>

'And they said to him (Qäwestos) "Behold your father and your mother are



standing outside the church. Go out to greet them . . . And hearing this he said to those people who had told him, "My father and mother are my Lord Jesus Christ and my Lady the Holy Virgin Mary . . ."<sup>27</sup>

Like other beings undergoing a change of status, novitiates had 'no status, property, insignia, secular clothing, rank, kinship position, nothing to demark them structurally from their fellows.'<sup>28</sup> Like other initiates, the novice owed complete obedience to the elders of the community, even if berated or humiliated. Abba Iyāsus Mo'a presented himself to Abba Yohanni the abbot of Däbrä Damo and vowed 'I will do what you say.'<sup>29</sup> According to his *gädl* Märha Krestos obeyed every command of the abbot of Däbrä Asbo.<sup>30</sup> Elijah and John the Baptist are said to have shown Zä-Yohannes the way to Däbrä Libanos, instructing him, 'Go there and accept what your teacher tells you.'<sup>31</sup>

The novice's passage into a new social status was symbolized both by his receipt of a new garb and his acceptance of a new name. In the Ethiopian Church a monastic habit consists of four main elements: the *qāmis*, *qenat*, *qob*, and *askēma*. Unfortunately, the terminology used for these garments in our texts is not consistent and makes it virtually impossible to reach any definite conclusions as to when the novice was invested with each item of clothing. Many texts, such as *Gädlä Matyas* and *Gädlä Anorēwos* use only the general term *lebsä menkwesennä* (monastic garb) and make no mention of the various individual pieces.<sup>33</sup>

What emerges clearly and cannot be contested is the fact that one crucial aspect of the process of becoming a monk was the abandonment of secular garb. Unlike the married priests of the Ethiopian Church who continued to wear their own clothes throughout their lives, and thus provided an outward sign of their embedment in secular society, the monk discarded all signs of his original birth and rank and emerged in his unique garb. As the 16th century Portuguese traveller Alvarez noted, 'the monks go about more respectfully in their habits and the priests (except the canons) go about as laymen.'<sup>34</sup>

The assumption of the *askēma* was frequently accompanied by the novice's assumption of a new name.

'And then after a little while, Abba Samu'el gave them the holy *askēmas*. And he dressed them on the twenty-fourth of the month of Hamle which is the day of Abba Nob the the martyr and the next day is that of Abäkäräzun the martyr. And because of this he called one Nob and the other blessed he called Abäkäräzun.'<sup>35</sup>

Ēwostatēwos was originally called Ma'eqäbä Egzi' and received his better known name at the completion of his monastic training. Abba Gäbrä Endreyas was born with the name Naftalim and was renamed when he received the *askēma*. Abba Gäbrä Krestos gave Mäharanä Egzi' 'the monastic *askēma* with the sign of the cross and dressed him in monastic garb and named



him Endreyas.<sup>38</sup> Numerous other examples could be added, and while it must be admitted that many monks did not change their names, no more common a symbol of the novice's loss of his previous social standing and his rebirth as a new *persona* is found in the literature.

The monk was, therefore, at least symbolically detached from the kinship and local alliances which figured so prominently in Ethiopian life.

'And Mäsqäl Kebra . . . said to him, "From what country have you come, monk traveller and from what family are you?" And Abunä Zä-Yohannes said to her, "A monk has neither country nor family"<sup>39</sup>

'And he (Filmona) said, "A monk that means death, one who is dead, buried, interred in the tomb."<sup>40</sup>

However, the outsiderhood of the monastic holy man neither began with nor was limited to his role as monk. First, it is important to stress again that while virtually all holy men were monks only a small percentage of monks were holy men. The vast majority of Ethiopia's monks lived rather unremarkable lives and played only a minor role in society. To be sure, this Eastern Christian example of monasticism, liminality, and *communitas* is of considerable comparative interest, but it should not be confused with the much more limited case of the holy man.

Secondly, it should be noted that the holy man's withdrawal from society did not begin only upon his arrival at the monastery. We have already noted the manner in which the decision to enter a monastery could itself require a renunciation of kinship ties. Similarly, the ascetic practices attributed to many holy men were frequently initiated prior to the assumption of the monastic lifestyle and continued independent of such a vocation.

The lifelong ascetic practices attributed to many holy men deserve special attention at this point because these played a major role in the development of the holy man's 'outsiderhood'. As Peter Brown has written in his important article on the holy man in Late Antiquity,

'The life of the holy man (and especially in Syria) is marked by so many histrionic feats of self-mortification that it is easy, at first sight to miss the deep social significance of ascetism as a long drawn out, solemn ritual of dissociation—of becoming the total stranger. For the society around him, the holy man is the one man who can stand outside the ties of family and of economic interest; whose attitude to food itself rejected all ties of solidarity to kin and village that, in the peasant societies of the Near East, had always been expressed by the gesture of eating.'<sup>41</sup>

In Ethiopia as well, the holy man's ascetism made a clear statement concerning his relationship to the surrounding society. By rejecting the best which that society had to offer, by refusing to marry and eat as others did, the saint placed himself outside and above the normal social context in which the bulk of the population lived and struggled. Unattached to kin through marriage,



unbothered by nature or the chronic food shortages which were of such concern to others, the monastic holy man appeared at times to have left not only society, but also humanity. He was therefore ideally situated to serve as a mediator between different social groups and, as we shall see below, between man and God.

The ascetic labours undertaken by the Ethiopian holy men were essentially the same as those attributed to Christian 'athletes' in other lands: celibacy, fasting, prayer, sleeplessness, bowing, standing, etc.<sup>42</sup> Of these, celibacy appears to have been the most important, for it was practised by virtually all of Ethiopia's holy men. Frequently, it was the young boy's decision not to marry which led him to leave his family and join the monastery. Anorēwos, Mäb'a Seyon, Filepos of Däbrä Asbo, and Täklä Hawaryat are a few of the saints who fled unwanted marriages to pursue the monastic life.<sup>43</sup>

Other holy men were married men, who left their wives and pursued a life of celibacy. Abba Gäbrä Endreyas, for example, had five children before he became a monk and 'ceased to soil the vessel of his flesh.'<sup>44</sup> Zär'a Abreham was twice married and twice a widower before he became a noted ascetic.<sup>45</sup>

Some monastic leaders are known to have extended the virtue of chastity to include not only sexual purity, but also the presence or sight of women. During the early years of Dabra Asbo, monks and nuns are said to have lived together, and even slept together without having sexual relations.<sup>46</sup> However, Saint Anorēwos objected to this practice and during his reign as *magabē*, he succeeded in having the nuns removed.<sup>47</sup> Bäsälötä Mika'el demanded a similar reform of the monasteries from Amdä Seyon, and Iyäsus Mo'a banned all women from the island of Hayq.<sup>48</sup> When Abba Yohanni of Däbrä 'Asa, who was raised in a monastery, saw women for the first time, his master Abba Ammoni informed him that the strange creatures were demons and admonished him to avoid them.<sup>49</sup>

The second of the ascetic practices to be undertaken by virtually all the Ethiopian holy men was fasting. Fasting and abstinence occupy a central position in the practice of the Ethiopian Church and it has accorded them an importance which probably exceeds that found in any other Christian community. 'The total number of fasting days amounts to about 250 a year, of which about 180 are obligatory for all and the rest are only for priests, monks, nuns, and other special groups in the Church.'<sup>50</sup> In light of the centrality of fasting to the Church as a whole it is not surprising that a number of saints are said to have begun to practise fasting before their selection of the monastic vocation.<sup>51</sup>

Given the large number of fast days observed by the Ethiopian Church, it is obvious that the 'fast' demanded of believers involved restrictions on the intake of food, but not total abstinence. Today 'fast generally implies one meal a day to be taken either in the evening or after 2.45 p.m. with total abstinence



from meat, fats, eggs, butter, milk, cheese.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, many of the holy men of the early Solomonic period distinguished themselves by the limited diet they consumed. Alvarez recounts his encounter with such a monk,

‘(This monk) lodged with me in my tent, and the first day at night I called him to eat, upon this, the novices came with watercresses, and they boiled them up without salt or oil; or anything else, and they ate those cresses without mixing in anything. I asked the novices about this, and they told me they did not eat bread. And because I had often heard say that there were many monks who did not eat bread, and I doubted this, I watched this monk and looked at him day and night . . . I never saw him eat anything but herbs, that is to say, watercresses, water-parsnips, where they found them, nettles, mallows, and if we passed near any monastery, he sent there to find a kale, and not finding herbs, the novices brought him lentils in a gourd of water newly sprouted with the shoot just out, he ate those, and I ate them, and it is the most dismal food in the world.’<sup>53</sup>

Similar reports appear in the hagiographic literature. Moreover, the restrictions which the holy men imposed upon their diets were far from arbitrary. Frequently, they seem intended to emphasize the separation between the saint and the rest of society. In Ethiopia, as in the Byzantine world, ‘many texts explicitly emphasize the opposition between nature and culture in the nourishment of the ascetic, which is primarily composed of plants which grow without cultivation and are consumed without cooking, whereas cultivated or cooked foods, the products of civilization like wine and bread, are proscribed.’<sup>54</sup>

During his stay at Däbrä Libanos, Abba Zä-Yohannes is said to have subsisted on only river plants.<sup>55</sup> Samu’el of Waldebba survived on only fruit and water during his sojourn in the wilderness, a diet resembling that endured by numerous ascetics.<sup>56</sup> Saint Täklä Hawaryat encountered a woman who ate only sweet and bitter leaves, and Täklä Haymanot survived on a similar diet during Lent, when he ate only on Sundays.<sup>57</sup> The author of *Gädlä Gäbrä Manfas Qeddus* makes the claim that his hero ‘had never drunk water, nor thought about food, eating only herbs and fruits of the wilderness . . .’<sup>58</sup>

The same saint, Gäbrä Mänfäs Qeddus was also one of many Ethiopian holy men who abandoned not only society’s food but also its borders. The retreat into the *gadam*, wilderness, is a common motif in the Ethiopian hagiographic literature. Abba Ēlyas, the nephew of the 15th century emperor Zär’a Ya’eqob fled into the wilderness in order to avoid involvement in the religious controversies and councils of the period. For twelve years he lived on wild fruits and even his uncle’s offer of a prestigious see could not lure him from his hermitage.<sup>59</sup> Samu’el of Däbrä Hallē Luya found the normal monastic routine far too cushy for his ascetic temperament. Following repeated attempts by the abbot Entones and other monks to curb his activities he departed for *gadamä hallēluya*, a place with no people but only animals. There



he could suffer to his hearts content.<sup>60</sup>

This episode in *Gädlä Samu'el* is interesting in several respects. First, it provides vivid confirmation of the antisocial character of ascetic practices. Even within the monastery extreme ascetism served to separate the practitioner from his fellows. Samu'el was only one of several ascetics to run afoul of monastic authorities in this respect.<sup>61</sup>

A second point which should not be ignored is the description of the *gädäm* as the realm of animals not of men. The author of *Gädlä Samu'el* emphasizes this point by also stating that in the wilderness Samu'el heard no human voices but only the sounds of animals.<sup>62</sup> The wilderness is depicted moreover not only as the realm of natural food and of animals but also of a paradisaal human-animal coexistence. Virtually all the texts which recount the holy man's retreat into the wilderness also relate stories of the bond created there between man and beast.

The aforementioned Samu'el rode into the wilderness on the back of a lion.<sup>63</sup> The *Life of Gäbrä Mämfäs Qeddus* contains several instances of association with lions and other animals. He himself was sent by God to live with lions and leopards and went into the land of Kabd accompanied by thirty [of each].<sup>64</sup> Wolves, rhinoceroses, elephants, and bulls are only a few of the animals which are said to have bowed before or have been ridden by holy men.<sup>65</sup>

'When (Buruk Amlak) descended from Däbrä Maryam, all the wild animals met him: the lion, leopard, elephant, buffalo, boar, rhinoceros, wild pig, baboon, hare, and monkey. And they all bowed together saying, "O glorious father, where are you going" for God had revealed the language of men to them.'<sup>66</sup>

Buruk Amlak was not the only holy man said to experience the ability to converse with or understand the speech of animals. 'One of the disciples of our father Iyäsus Mo'a, was named Selwanos and the grace of God rested upon him and the meaning of the voices of animals and birds was revealed to him.'<sup>67</sup>

How are we to understand such hagiographical traditions of amity and communication between the saints and animals?

As Eliade has noted

'In numerous traditions, friendship with animals and understanding their language represent paradisaal syndromes. In the beginning, that is, in mythical times, man lived at peace with the animals and understood their speech. It was not until after a primordial catastrophe, comparable to the "Fall" of Biblical tradition, that man became what he is today—mortal, sexed, obliged to work to feed himself, and at enmity with the animals'.<sup>68</sup>

A similar 'paradisaal syndrome' might underlie our Ethiopian traditions. Both in his celibacy and in his rejection of 'civilized' food, the holy man



participated in a manner of life reminiscent of that which preceded the 'Fall'. So, too, the ability of the saint to converse with animals may recall a similar Edenic past. Indeed, in at least one account of human-animal dialogue the Genesis story of the snake's conversation with Eve is explicitly recalled.<sup>69</sup>

Among several of the Ethiopian holy men residence in the wilderness was accompanied by restricted movement. One of the first Europeans to reach Ethiopia showed Alvarez the cave where a white man (!) had lived for twenty years. 'They went to look at his dwelling or cave and found it closed up from inside with a strong wall, so that no one could enter it or come out of it.'<sup>70</sup> Alvarez himself had heard of monks 'who, during the whole of Lent, did not sit down and always remained on foot', and visited one such ascetic and 'found him standing in a walled tabernacle his own size.'<sup>71</sup>

Once again, the accounts contained in the *gādlāt* contain a similar picture. Samu'el of Waldebbba entered 'a hole on the twelfth of the month of Genbot and remained standing without sitting or resting while praying to the creator of all; without drinking water or eating fruit, and every day he desired death so as to fulfill his duty. And he remained (thus) until the thirteenth of Nahasē.'<sup>72</sup> Such periods of standing were frequently associated with such other ascetic practices as sleeplessness, repeated bowing, and prayer.

### THE ANGEL

The extent to which such practices placed the holy man outside and beyond the realm of normal human society is vividly demonstrated by the 'angelic' imagery which surrounded him.

Both as a monk and as an ascetic, the image of the holy man was intimately associated with the angel. Indeed at times the line drawn between the angels and the holy men appears to have been a thin one. The angels are frequently referred to by the honorific title 'qeddus', 'saint'. They were also believed to appear on earth as monks.<sup>73</sup> Not surprisingly therefore, the monastic holy men were at times suspected of being not human beings, but angels.

A monk who journeyed from Shāwa to Amhara with Saint Tāklā Haymanot asked the holy man, 'O father, are you a man or an angel?' Although the saint protested that he was only a human being, this monk and others considered him to be a celestial being.<sup>74</sup> Abba Ēlyas appeared to his cousin King Ba'eda Maryam 'like an angel of heaven.'<sup>75</sup>

In part, the monastic saint's image was derived from the 'angelic' character of the monastic garb. The *askēma*, which today signifies the achievement of the highest degree of monastic excellence, is referred to by the author of *Gādlā Tadēwos of Dābrā Maryam* as the 'askēma of angels'.<sup>76</sup> When Abba Bakimos invested Filepos of Dābrā Bizan with the monastic habit he spoke to his disciple saying, 'Take the 'asf of angels and leave that which is worldly and become like the angels.'<sup>77</sup>



While the monastic garb or a sign at birth may have inaugurated the saint's 'angelic' life,<sup>78</sup> it was through self-denial that he purified himself and confirmed his status. Since there is no marriage in heaven,<sup>79</sup> the monk's chastity placed him in the company of the angels who were virginal and kept themselves pure from unclean women. Like the angels, the holy man engaged in ceaseless prayers,<sup>81</sup> remained vigilant throughout the night,<sup>82</sup> and ignored hunger and thirst.<sup>83</sup> He strove to be, like the angels, a pure being with no flesh.<sup>84</sup>

By living an 'angelic life', the holy men become like the angels, divine messengers believed to be capable of both conveying and influencing divine will. Such a mediatory role was of tremendous importance in Ethiopia where a pious Christian was primarily concerned with gaining the favour of an immediate figure such as an angel, a holy man, or Mary, rather than appealing to a remote and unreachable God.

A Christian taken captive by pagans prayed for the help of Mārha Krestos, the abbot of Dābrā Libanos.<sup>85</sup> The parents of Sāmṛā Krestos asked Abba Fērē Mata'e to pray on their behalf, so that they might have a son.<sup>86</sup> The disciples of Gābrā Mäsqāl asked him to drive away a plague of locusts via his prayers.<sup>87</sup> Thus, like the angels, the monastic holy man was recognized as a mediating figure capable of reaching and influencing a distant God.

The rise of the Solomonic dynasty in 1270 marked the beginning of two centuries of dramatic Christian military expansion across the Ethiopian plateau. The momentous political events of this period were accompanied by developments of comparable significance for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, most notably the rise of the monastic holy man. In this paper, it has not been our intention to present the holy man as a one-dimensional figure with a single source of power and influence. Rather, we have attempted to focus attention upon one feature of the admittedly multi-faceted role played by these figures. In concentrating upon the 'outsiderhood' of the holy man we hope to have illuminated at least one aspect of the saints' lives and to have offered some insight into the 'thought-world' of the society which exalted them.

## NOTES

- 1 Sergew Hable Sellasie, *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History to 1270* Addis Ababa: United Printers, 1972.
- 2 On this period see Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopian 1270-1527*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.
- 3 *Journal of Roman Studies* 61, 1971
- 4 G. W. B. Huntingford, The Saints of Medieval Ethiopia, *Abba Salama* 10: 257-341; the present author's *The Monastic Holy Man and the Christianization of Early Solomonic Ethiopia* (Wiesbaden, 1984) deals extensively with this subject.
- 5 In *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press 1974, p. 231.



- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 233.
- 7 See Tadesse especially chapters 3 and 4, and for what follows S. Kaplan The rise of the monastic holy man in early Solomonic Ethiopia. *Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies* (in press).
- 8 On the Ēwostations, Tadesse, pp. 209–231.
- 9 J. A. Quirin, The Beta Israel (Felasha) in Ethiopian History: Caste Formation and Cultural Change (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1977).
- 10 Tadesse Tamrat, 'Some Notes on the Fifteenth Century Stephanite "heresy" in Ethiopian Church'. *Rassegna di studi etiopici* 22: 103–115.
- 11 Kaplan *The Monastic Holy Man*, Chapter 3.
- 12 I. Wajenberg, 'Das Leben des hl. Jafqerena Egzi'. *Orientalia Cristiana Analecta* 106: p. 78.
- 13 *Ibid.*, pp. 86–88. It is probably significant that these episodes follow a series of miracles in which the saint aided childless couples. The saint's ability to intervene in domestic disputes may have depended, in part, upon previous services rendered to the couple.
- 14 C. Conti Rossini, *Acta S. Basalota Mika'el et S. Anorewos* in *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, Script. Aeth. (hereafter CSCO) 20, (1905) p. 98.
- 15 S. Kur, *Actes de Marha Krestos* CSCO 61.62 (1972), p. 79, 131.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 114
- 17 Brown, p. 87.
- 18 M. Schneider, *Actes de Za Yohannes de Kebran* CSCO (1972), 63, 64.
- 19 M. Hill, *The Religious Order*. London: Heinemann, 1973, p. 55. The second function of the entrance test of merit, together with the stripping process, is that of a *rite de passage*. cf. *ibid.*, p. 60 n. 101.
- 20 S. Kur, *Actes de Iyasus Mo'a*, CSCO, 49, 50, p. 10; (1965), C. Conti Rossini, 'I Gadla Filipos ed il Gadla Yohannes' di Dabra Bizan "Memorie della Reale Accademia dei Lincei" (1901) 8: 93; *Gädlä Samu'el of Hallä Luya* Fonds Conti Rossini 11 (Accademia Nazionale Dei Lincei) f. 10r.
- 21 *Gädlä Mädhaniṇā Egzi* ' (Fonds Conti Rossini 13) f. 7r; E. A. W. Budge *The Life and Miracles of Takla Haymanot*. London: Private Printing 1906 p. 26.
- 22 *Gädlä Iyāsus Mo'a* pp. 20, 29; *Gädlä Märha Krestos* pp. 4, 7, 12–13.
- 23 *Gädlä Bäsälotä Mika'el*, p. 14; *Gädlä Qāwestos* p. 107.
- 24 M. de la Fuye, *Actes de Filmona* CSCO (1958), 35, 36: 10–20.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- 26 *Gädlä Märha Krestos*, p. 18.
- 27 *Gädlä Qāwestos*, p. 107.
- 28 V. Turner, *Between and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage*. in *The Forest of Symbols*, Ithaca, Cornell, pp. 98–99.
- 29 *Gädlä Iyāsus Mo'a*, p. 11.
- 30 *Gädlä Märha Krestos*, p. 29.
- 31 *Gädlä Zā-Yohannes*, p. 9.
- 32 Tadesse, *Church and State*, pp. 164–165.
- 33 *Gädlä Matyas of Adge*, (Fonds Conti Rossini 84) f. 26v, *Gädlä Anorewos*, p. 69; See also *Gädlä Bäsälotä Mika'el*, p. 14; *Gädlä Yafqerännā Egzi*, p. 16, B. Turaiev, *Acta S. Aronis et S. Phillipi*, CSCO 20, 1905 pp. 126, 190 and others.
- 34 F. Alvarez, *The Prester John of the Indies* tr. C. F. Beckingham and G. W. B. Huntingford, Cambridge Hakuyt Society, 1961, p. 175.
- 35 C. Conti Rossini, *Acta Sancti Abakarazun et Sancti Takla Hawaryat*, CSCO 24 (1910), p. 3.



- 36 B. Turaiev, *Acta S. Eustathii in Monumenta Aethiopiae Hagiologica* III Petropoli 1905 pp. 22-3.
- 37 *Tāamerā Gädrā Endreyas* Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library (EMML) 654, ff. 1r, 3r.
- 38 *Gädlä Endreyas of Säffe'a* (Fonds Conti Rossini, 84) f. 5V.
- 39 *Gädlä Zä-Yohannes*, p. 12.
- 40 *Gädlä Filmona*, p. 26, Donald Levine writing of the status of the monk in modern pre-revolutionary Ethiopia notes that 'one who desires this status bequeaths his worldly possessions and goes through a ceremony in the church in which his body is declared dead . . . Once he has become a monk, an Ethiopian is a legal non-entity. This frees him from all tax obligations and any debts he may have incurred . . . '
- 41 Brown, pp. 91-2.
- 42 A. Vööbus, *A History of Ascetism in the Syrian Orient*, II Louvain, 1960, pp. 256-291.
- 43 *Gädlä Anorēwos* p. 68, *Gädlä Filepos* pp. 185-7, *Gädlä Täklä Hawaryat* pp. 69-70, E. A. W. Budge *The Life of Maba'Seyon*, London, W. Griggs, 1898, p. 4.
- 44 *Tä'amorä Gäbrä Endreyas* ff. 2-3.
- 45 B. Turaiev, *Acta S. Fere Mika'el et S. Zar'a Abraham*, CSCO, 23 1905, p. 17.
- 46 *Gädlä Täklä Haymanot*, p. 88.
- 47 *Gädlä Anorēwos*, pp. 71-3.
- 48 *Gädlä Bäsälötä Mika'el*, p. 36; *Gädlä Iyäsus Mo'a*, p. 30.
- 49 R. Basset, "Vie d'Abba Yohanni", *Bulletin de correspondance africaine*, (1884) pp. 446-7.
- 50 A Wondmagegnehu and J. Motovv, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, Addis Ababa, Ethiopian Orthodox Mission, 1970, p. 64.
- 51 *Gädlä Anorēwos*, p. 68; *Gädlä Bäsälötä Mika'el*, pp. 7, 10; *Gädlä Ēwostatēwos*, p. 13; *Gädlä Zä-Yohannes* p. 8; *Gädlä Ananya* (Fonds Conti Rossini 90) f. 2v; *Gädlä Sämrä Krestos* (Fonds Conti Rossini 88) f. 57v.
- 52 A. Wondmagegnehu, p. 63.
- 53 Alvarez, p. 391.
- 54 E. Patlagean, 'A Byzance: ancienne hagiographie et histoire sociale' *Annales* 23 (1968) p. 114.
- 55 *Gädlä Zä-Yohannes*, p. 9.
- 56 B. Turaiev, *Vita Samuelis Valdebani Petropoli Sumptibus Universitatis Caesareae Petropoitiinae* 1902, p. 5 cf. E. A. W. Budge, *The Book of the Saints of the Ethiopian Church*, Cambridge, 1928, pp. 364-366.
- 57 *Gädlä Täklä Hawaryat*, p. 74, cf. p. 76; *Gädlä Täklä Haymanot*, p. 37.
- 58 Huntingford, p. 275.
- 59 *Gädlä Ēlyas*, EMML 1126, ff. 30-31.
- 60 *Gädlä Samu'el of Hallē Luya*, ff. 5-7.
- 61 *Ibid.*, ff. 6r, 23r; *Gädlä Matyas*, f. 31v; C. Conti Rossini, 'Gli atti di Abba Yonas' in *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei*, ser. 5 22 (1903), pp. 196-7.
- 62 *Gädlä Samu'el of Hallē Luya*, f. 7v.
- 63 *Ibid.*, 6r.
- 64 Huntingford, p. 291.
- 65 C. Conti Rossini, Un Santo eritreo: Buruk Amlak. *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei* (1938) ser. 6 14: 44, *Gadla Filepos of Dabra Bizan*, pp. 80, 106; *Gädlä Märha Krestos*, p. 87; *Gädlä Samu'el of Waldebba*, p. 3 R. de Santis, Il Gadla Tadewos di Dabra Bartwa. *Annali Lateranensi* (1942), 6: 30-4.



- 66 *Gädlä Buruk Amlak*, p. 44.  
 67 *Gädlä Iyäsus Mo'a*, p. 24.  
 68 M. Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1972, p. 99. It is worthwhile to note that Eliade examines the subject of human-animal communication in the context of shamanic initiation.  
 69 *Gädlä Täklä Hawaryat*, pp. 84-5.  
 70 Alvarez, p. 394.  
 71 *Ibid.*, p. 392.  
 72 *Gädlä Samu'el*, p. 7.  
 73 *Gädlä Filipos of Däbrä Bizan*, p. 72, *Gädlä Gäbrä Masih* (Fonds Conti Rossini 89) ff. 5-6 'It is proper that we appear as monks whose flesh is pure through virginity resembling angels who have no flesh.'  
 74 *Gädlä Täklä Haymanot*, pp. 62-5.  
 75 *Gädlä Ēlyas*, f. 34b.  
 76 V. Six, *Die Vita des Abuna Tadewos von Dabra Maryam im Tanasee*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1975, p. 140.  
 77 *Gädlä Filepos*, p. 78.  
 78 *Ibid.*, p. 80; A. Caquot, 'Gadla Ezra' *Annales d'Éthiopie* 4 (1961) p. 72; *Gädlä Habtä Sellasē* (Fonds Conti Rossini 9) f. 35r.  
 79 *Gädlä Tadēwos of Däbrä Maryam*, p. 109.  
 80 *Gädlä Bäsälotä Mika'el* p. 11; *Gädlä Ēwostatēwos*, p. 25; *Gädlä Samu'el of Halle Luya*: f. 5v.  
 81 *Gädlä Filmona*, p. 23; *Gädlä Buruk Amlak*, p. 38.  
 82 *Gädlä Bäsälotä Mika'el*, p. 48; *Gädlä Mādhaninā Egzi'* (Fonds Conti Rossini 13) f. 57r.  
 83 *Gädlä Tadēwos of Däbrä Maryam*, p. 208; *Gadla Bagge'u* EMMML 1960 f. 59v.  
 84 *Gädlä Filmona*, p. 26.  
 85 *Gädlä Mārha Krestos*, p. 131.  
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 87 *Gädlä Gäbrä Mäsqäl* (Fonds Conti Rossini 11) f. 57r.

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# **'OPTING OUT' IN THERAVADA BUDDHISM AND MEDIEVAL CHRISTIANITY**

## **A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MONASTICISM AS ALTERNATIVE STRUCTURE**

**Ilana Friedrich Silber**

Monks and hermits have received relatively little attention in sociology where they were easily overshadowed by religious figures of more obvious sociological interest, such as charismatic leaders, priests or prophets. And indeed, monks and hermits might readily appear—at least to a contemporary mind—as marginal, perhaps even aberrant phenomena of minor social significance. Their way of life stands in outright contradiction to what goes for normal behaviour in wider society and this, not in mere matters of detail but in the most basic parameters of ordinary human life such as sex, food, kinship and property, to mention only the most salient. Adhering to a radically atypical and in many ways asocial type of behaviour, they voluntarily opt out of social life as commonly defined. This opting out can even assume, at times, a clearly spatial character, as when it leads to seclusion in faraway, non-populated areas such as deserts and forests, or at the outer fringes of human settlements.

Attention has been paid, however, to the inner features of monasticism as a type of social organization and comparisons have been drawn with either modern closed, total institutions or the various communal experiments of the 'counter-culture'.<sup>1</sup> With some exceptions though, the tendency has been to relate to monasticism as a thing-in-itself rather than as part of a wider social and cultural context. As for the most individual, eremitic forms of monasticism, they have been left even more systematically beyond the pale of any type of social analysis.<sup>2</sup>

This paper proposes to take its cue from Emile Durkheim's classic work on suicide, which may still stand as a tour de force in tracing the social and cultural coordinates of what would seem the ultimate in individual, a- or antisocial behaviour.<sup>3</sup> A number of recent studies on 'world-renunciation' in Indian religion and on Christian asceticism in the Late Antiquity were also a marked source of inspiration.<sup>4</sup> Common to them is the analysis of an entire



range of paradoxical but nonetheless crucial relations and feedback processes between various forms of opting out, often of a most radical type, and extant social structures.

The intent will be here to look at the relation between opting out and society from a comparative perspective, in the context of two civilizations where opting out became an especially prominent phenomenon: traditional Theravada Buddhism and Medieval Catholicism. Both civilizations are usually characterized in post-Weberian language as entailing, if in different ways, strongly 'other-worldly' or 'outworldly' orientations in their central value-system.<sup>5</sup> No religion, of course, can be totally other-worldly: 'if it were, it would not survive its founder, let alone succeed in creating social structures, shaping cultures and producing continuities.'<sup>6</sup> In both historical contexts, though, opting out can be seen as probably the closest embodiment of the 'other-worldly' stance, and as stemming from undoubtedly pervasive, central cultural orientations. In Theravada countries even more strikingly, opting out corresponded to what was unanimously and sustainedly acknowledged as the very highest ideal, the enactment of which put the seeker of outworldly salvation, paradoxically, at the apex of the scale of social prestige.

'Traditional Theravada Buddhism' will be used here to indicate Buddhism as it has been traditionally predominant, for different lengths of time, in Burma, Thailand and Ceylon (at least 1500 years in the case of Ceylon, and about 800 in the case of Burma and Thailand); 'medieval Catholicism' will refer mostly to the period between the 6th and 13th century—sometimes called the 'Benedictine centuries'—and geographically to Western Europe, roughly to what corresponds to the area of modern France, Germany, Italy and England (thus excluding Spanish and Irish monasticism).

Of central interest here is the powerful development of monasticism in both cases, i.e. the fact that religious opting out, as motivated essentially by the search for individual salvation, gave rise to extensive monastic networks. At the same time, however, the overall significance of monasticism within these two historical settings cannot but basically differ: Christian monasticism took shape as part of a wider Church, in relation to which it was only a secondary historical development; in contrast, the Buddhist monastic order—the Sangha—did not have to come to terms with a wider, encompassing ecclesiastical institution. Further, while monasticism can be said to have achieved a social position of pivotal importance in both cases, it also developed very different, even contrasting patterns of interaction with wider society. It is this difference which will be the focus of this paper.<sup>6b</sup>

As a first step, though, it is important to take a better look at monasticism as such, and acknowledge the very essential duality, or contradiction which seems to lie at its core. As I have already suggested, opting out in these two settings is obviously far from being an option in the void, and appears, rather,



as an eminently 'socialized' option well rooted in wider cultural premises. At the same time, however, one cannot deny monasticism its truly asocial, outsider-like character. In trying to account for this contradictory nature of monasticism, it is suggested here to borrow from the field of cultural anthropology and more specifically, from the work of Victor Turner, where much prominence is given to a more general, but it seems to me, closely related, type of duality. Turner argues that our view of society has tended to be over-structured,<sup>7</sup> a claim which seems more than persuasive, recalling similar warnings voiced in the past against 'over-functionalized' theories of society or 'oversocialized' conceptions of man-in-society.<sup>8</sup> Instead, Turner suggests that society be understood as a constant interweaving, interplay of 'structure' and 'antistructure'. Starting from there, one might conceive societies as displaying variations not only in their social structures, but also in the sheer degree of their structuration and the manner in which they permit and construct the interweaving of structure and antistructure. The intriguing question then—pertinent to a comparative study of monasticism in what will be called hereon, in short, 'other-worldly' societies—is whether such societies, because of the anti-social, anti-institutional potential the other- or outworldliness of their religious premises would seem to entail, are characterized by a specific 'economy' of antistructure, and how to situate monasticism from such a point of view.

The intention though is not to equate monasticism with anti-structure in Turner's sense of the term. Antistructure, in his work, refers to a property of certain conditions or situations in social life, usually temporary, transitory, 'liminal' situations, which makes them particularly conducive to solitary, non-hierarchical, back-to-basic modes of fellowship—what Turner calls in short 'communitas'—usually not favored in 'normal', structured social settings. From such a vantage point, and in the two civilizational cases considered, monasticism stands, if one may say, in a state of betwixt-and-between. It definitely entails from within strong egalitarian aspects, elements of status-leveling and de-structuration and many tenets, some alluded to at the beginning of this paper, basically in contradiction with ordinary social life and structure. No less important, it shares with liminal or antistructural situations, the all-distinctive element of *withdrawal* from normal social life. At the same time, however, it is not a passing, fleeting phase in human relationships but a highly institutionalized structure in itself, one eventually becoming very much a part of the wider social structure. Further, monasticism has not been necessarily conducive to *communitas* in Turner's sense, and has even produced forceful internal principles of authority and hierarchy. At any rate, *communitas* appears to have remained for the most a secondary, rather minor feature of the monastic setting, with some interesting variations however, which will be pointed out later, between Christian and Buddhist monasticism



in this respect.

Taking the above into account, it might be more useful to perceive in monasticism not so much antistructure, but perhaps rather a type of 'alternative structure' characterized by a tight interweaving of structural and anti-structural elements whose ambiguous relation to wider society might be in turn structured or constructed differently in varying cultural settings.

This brings us back to the question of the overall place of monasticism in an eventual economy of antistructure perhaps specific to 'other-worldly' societies. A possible answer, one alluded to in some works,<sup>9</sup> is what can be called the safety-valve model according to which societies would assign to monasticism as a special, segregated sector, roles and orientations whose legitimacy they cannot utterly deny, but which entail a subversive, antisocial or antistructural potential. Such a model, if suggestive of some aspects of the interaction between monasticism and society, is not altogether satisfying, if only because of its over-systemic, over-mechanistic assumptions about the functioning of complex, macro-civilizational entities. More important to this discussion, it cannot account for the variability in patterns of interaction between monasticism and society in different civilizational settings, this being precisely the point which I would like now to develop by outlining a number of contrastive features displayed by Theravada Buddhism and Medieval Catholicism from this point of view.

Applying the notion of structure, or structuration, in Turner's sense, there seems to be here a definite contrast: Christian monasticism appears as much more 'structured', be it in each monastery individually or in the various powerful orders, or confederations of monasteries which developed over time, whereas the Buddhist Sangha has retained a certain organizational 'looseness'. The picture changes though if one tries to use the notion of structure in a systemic, even macro-systemic sense, i.e. if one looks at the position of monasticism within the overall social structure. From such a perspective, it is now the turn of Buddhist monasticism to appear as much more 'structured': it retained with impressive stability and only minor variations, a specific social position and a specific pattern of relationship with wider society, while the relation of Christian monasticism with its environment underwent significant developments and was the focus of constant uncertainties and controversies, sometimes of far-reaching political impact on wider society.

This greater organizational or institutional capacity of Christian monasticism on the one hand and its greater ambiguity and instability in overall social position on the other are not really contradictory. Rather, they can be understood as two complementary aspects of Christian monasticism as somehow more of an 'alternative structure', in the sense of displaying a stronger differentiation from wider society and at the same time a more forceful interaction, perhaps even competition, with other groups and sectors. This



general impression is supported by three major differences between Christian and Buddhist monasticism which will be analysed below in further detail.

1. First, Christian monasticism has characteristically displayed, and this in many ways and at many levels, a greater degree of organizational, economic and political autonomy from its immediate social setting.

2. Second, the history of the relation between Christian monasticism and the structure of authority extant in the rest of society—be it the Church or secular institutions—has known much more interpenetration and mutual impingement, processes in which, interestingly enough, even the most individual, extreme forms of opting out were able to play a role.

3. Third, while *communitas*, either 'normative' or 'spontaneous'<sup>10</sup> cannot be seen as a dominant feature of the monastic setting in either of the two cases considered, Christian monasticism on the whole seems to have displayed a greater predisposition at becoming if not a carrier, at least a seedbed of *communitas*-like, antistructural orientations in Turner's sense. This could bring it at times—although only toward the end of the period discussed, and not in the Benedictine mainstream—to the very borderline of heterodoxy, a fact which may be indicative of its clearer, stronger standing as an alternative structure never fully incorporated into a specific social order.

The more detailed discussion of these three major differences will begin with the Buddhist case, then using it as a background to throw into relief the contrastive features of the Christian case.

The first step here will be a brief, and necessarily much simplified incursion into the world of Buddhist doctrine, and this for two reasons: first, from the point of view of the issues raised this paper, canonical Buddhism<sup>11</sup> is remarkable in that it explicitly provides at the doctrinal level for a specific model of interaction between monks and laymen; second, this doctrinal model already entails the major elements of the actual interaction between monks and society as it has historically evolved in Theravada Buddhist countries.

The key issue from this point of view seems to be the tension-ridden relation, within the canonical corpus, between two very basic notions, karma and nirvana. Salvation in Buddhism is understood as the escape from *samsara*, the cycle of births and rebirths in a life of impermanence and suffering. The basic condition for such escape lies in the transcending of all desire, and thus, of the very root of all suffering. Only through ascetic and meditative discipline can one hope to climb the various steps leading to perfection and to reach the state of nirvana—a state of ultimate enlightenment, utter bliss and, at the same time, total detachment from all mundane fetters.

In the light of such tenets, one readily understands that Buddhism has often been considered as the other-worldly religion par excellence. It has been pointed out, though, that while the achievement of enlightenment is indeed



oriented towards other-worldliness, it also inherently implies a certain 'worldliness in the very belief that man is perfectible and that perfection can be attained here and now.'<sup>12</sup>

The notion of karma seems to confirm that there is indeed a place in Buddhism for a more worldly orientation. Progress along the path to salvation, according to the law of karma, is the result of the merit one has accumulated during past and present lives. But merit also ensures the betterment of one's condition in both present and future existence in worldly terms primarily, such as wealth, health and power, and it does not in itself lead to nirvana, which is altogether beyond the cycle of rebirths.<sup>13</sup>

That Buddhism entails a certain tolerance and acknowledgement of worldliness is amply confirmed by the pains which doctrinal Buddhism takes to provide for a specific model of relationship between monks and laymen. The built-in tension between karma and nirvana, between striving for a better rebirth and the escape from the cycle of rebirths, is mitigated, if not solved, in a striking way: the quest for nirvana remains the realm of the 'virtuoso', who is able and willing to engage in the path of renunciation and meditation, while merit-accumulation, of no immediate soteriological relevance, provides 'secondary goals' for others. What is involved here is a matter not merely of differentiation, but of hierarchy: those who strive for salvation are without doubt conceived as superior to the laymen.

One dramatic index of the disparate treatment of virtuosi and laymen is the contrast between the lay ethic, consisting of only five precepts, and the elaborate 227 precepts for monks.<sup>14</sup> Lay Buddhism however does not remain without doctrinal sanction, and within the scriptural body, the two ethics, that of the monk and that of the layman—are far from being totally disconnected. It will be enough to emphasize here two points of doctrine which clearly contribute to shape their relation.

The first one is a basic ambiguity in the definition of the monk's vocation itself. If a religion could indeed be totally other-worldly, the monk would be exclusively engaged in the quest for nirvana and his contact with the layman reduced to the bare minimum necessary to ensure his survival since he himself is prohibited from working for his material support. But another major concern is the maintenance of the teachings themselves, which implies ensuring their correct transmission and the survival of the monastic community, and demands therefore a certain degree of worldly involvement.<sup>15</sup> The issue as such was never conclusively settled. In fact, it intermeshed with and was amplified by another issue, that of 'compassion' versus 'selfishness', in which the monk who concentrated exclusively on the quest for nirvana was deemed to be selfish for refusing to help others in their slower way to salvation.<sup>16</sup>

A second element of doctrine which plays a crucial role in maintaining a connection between renouncers and laymen is the bestowal of gifts, *dana*. The



most effective way of obtaining merit for a layman is to support the monks materially with gifts, the monks being said to provide laymen thereby with a 'field of merit'. It must be stressed that, theoretically at least, no exchange is implied here and that the very fact of giving is what confers merit on the layman, it is not the monk who confers it.

In sum, doctrinal Buddhism is characterized by the existence of a dual standard,<sup>17</sup> one which upholds a clear-cut distinction between virtuoso and layman, but also avoids total disconnection between them. This dual standard enables the layman to cope, to a certain extent, with the extreme other-worldliness of the ideal of renunciation. It provides a certain degree of legitimation for lay activities, while at the same time unambiguously affirming the superiority of the virtuoso's pursuit of outworldliness. What deserves special stress here, are those features of doctrinal Buddhism which contribute to defining and at the same time, circumventing the social position of the virtuosi. The lay world, although undoubtedly deemed inferior, is allowed a significant degree of autonomy. But, and this is of crucial significance—it is never conceived as the locus of salvation. Neither is it supposed to model itself after the highest Buddhist ideals; at no point is the principle of renunciation as such expected to govern laymen in worldly affairs, nor is the renouncer himself expected to be directly involved in the supervision and management of the social order. Virtuosi stand, as a consequence, as a very special type of elite, combining a status of ultimate superiority with a narrowly defined involvement in and lack of control upon secular and collective life. This makes for an imbalance and disconnection between prestige and power which seems to have become a characteristic feature of the actual history of monasticism in Theravada Buddhist countries.<sup>18</sup> Two major aspects of monasticism's overall social position will be underlined here, which can be seen as contributing to this imbalance between prestige and power. The first aspect is monks' low level of autonomy from the wider social environment; the second being the limited nature of their political impact on society at large. The analysis of these two aspects has to start with the Sangha's organizational characteristics.

Buddhism seems to have originally had strong eremitical tendencies, the early followers of Buddha being supposedly enjoined to become wandering mendicants.<sup>19</sup> In time, the order of monks took on a clearly sedentary, and coenobitic monastic shape. Nevertheless, and despite significant variations in formal organization in the different Theravada countries,<sup>20</sup> the Sangha retained a relatively amorphous character, mostly evident in the quasi-independence of individual monasteries and the low level of hierarchization and centralization both within and between monasteries. Whatever hierarchy there was and still is in the Sangha pertains, at least ideally, to relations of respect rather than obedience.<sup>21</sup> In clear contrast with Christian monasticism, there was no 'vow of obedience' here accompanying those of chastity and



poverty. Nor was there any commitment to *stabilitas loci*, i.e. to remain in one and the same monastery, eventually for life. One could more or less join or leave the Sangha at will or leave one monastery for another.

An important aspect of the general organizational weakness of the Sangha is that it did not wield any temporal authority of its own and was not really able to enforce an effective system of sanctions to ensure its internal discipline and purity. One of the consequences was that the Sangha came to depend on external forces, and especially on the willingness, ability and even initiative of the political center to ensure its internal cohesion and purity. Indeed, kings embarked on occasion on celebrated 'campaigns of purification', where religious, political and even economic motives seem to have often combined,<sup>22</sup> even if, it must be stressed, purification took place as a rule on the Sangha's own terms, i.e. in accordance to the Vinaya rules and with its agreement. A further consequence is that centralization and hierarchization in the Sangha, if at times quite extensive, would fluctuate with the ups and downs of kingship and state, without the active support of which, it seems, they were not to be sustained for long.

Similar reliance on external resources appeared again, all importantly, in the monks' nearly total dependence on laymen for their material support where the gift-relationship played the central role. Buddhist monks were neither supposed to labour the land nor to handle any money or private property. Even when the interdictions in these matters were transgressed, as they were in a most systematic and permanent manner in monastic landlordism in Ceylon, monks did not usually engage in trading or any kind of sustained economic entrepreneurship.<sup>23</sup>

Another indication of the rather weak autonomization of Buddhist monasticism from wider society is the partial incorporation of monkhood in Burma and Thailand (but not Ceylon) into the life-cycle of most of the male population as a temporary stage, involving usually male youth, who do not yet assume the usual duties of an adult member of the community, or elderly people, whose participation in social life is already on the decline.<sup>24</sup> This, however, cannot be defined as a full-blown rite of passage, since there is here again much looseness and fluidity: first, the precise age at which a young man enters the Sangha and the length of time he spends in it can vary greatly; second, participation is far from universal: not every youth automatically joins and only a minority of the elderly, for whom it remains a purely voluntary option, enter. A not insignificant consequence of this institution of temporary monkhood is that laymen could become a permanent force of normative control upon monks since they had been themselves closely acquainted with the status and duties of monkhood.

A last aspect of the weak autonomization of Theravada Buddhist monasticism is its tendency to retain a close connection to local units, apparent also in



the fact that it did not develop any kind of cross- or supranational organizational framework. This seems also to connect to the tendency of Buddhism to develop into a crucial dimension of national identity, a tendency which became most evident in times of invasion and modern colonialism in Ceylon and Burma.<sup>25</sup> A certain paradox exists here, since these countries are at the same time well aware of their being part of a wider, multinational Theravada complex, a fact which only underscores the absence of a supranational framework or center.

It should be clear by now that monks have very much become a part of the wider structure. This is further reinforced by the fact that they have been drawn, sometimes to a very great extent, into day-to-day interaction with laymen, although it must be noted, always within certain limits and usually as outsiders, as a third party with no personal interests at stake. At the local level especially, the monastery has become an all-important institution in communal life. The monks' involvement in local affairs can be divided, more or less, into three general categories: participation in lay rituals (without, however, playing any mediating priest-like role); the education of children and youth; and general counseling. This counsel could vary in nature and scope and at its broadest, could address individual as well as communal problems, take the form of mere advice or therapy, and also include a whole gamut of 'magical' and astrological practices, not strictly within the frame of reference of 'higher' Buddhism.

The incorporation of monks into the social structure and their involvement—even if ultimately within bounds—in lay affairs, make the weakness of its direct political power even more striking. If certainly not without political importance in a general sense, the Sangha did not become an independent nucleus of political power. It never vied with kings for authority over worldly and political affairs, even if it did try to unfluence or oppose rulers, especially in matters pertaining to Buddhism itself. Moreover, until recent, modern developments, it did not try to impose itself as an autonomous, determinant force in the existing political framework, or even less to propound an alternative form of political structure.<sup>26</sup>

There were thus very real limits to monks' involvement in worldly matters in many domains, limits which can be understood as not only compatible with their ideology but also as sustaining their special prestige by preserving the boundaries between them as carriers of revered cultural values and other more mundane types of groups and interests. All in all, however, the initial ideal of world-renunciation has undoubtedly undergone a significant toning-down. Most importantly, many monks were and still are, in practice, as little desirous of nirvana, and as interested in the accumulation of merit and a better rebirth as laymen. Further, they conform to only minimal standards of knowledge and spiritual achievement and even engage in various occult arts, even if contrary



to doctrine.<sup>27</sup>

Full, radical world-renunciation did not, however, disappear totally from the social picture. Within the Sangha itself, tension between more or less socialized forms of renunciation, between emphasis on 'teaching' or the practice of meditation persisted.<sup>28</sup> Radical renouncers, engaged in the single-minded pursuit of nirvana through meditation, either in total isolation or forest-hermitages, became a marginal and somehow deviant minority *vis-à-vis* a dominant majority of 'village-monks' opting for greater involvement with lay society. Their situation was rather paradoxical: the man who achieved enlightenment, the *arahat*, remained the uncontested ideal, and he who isolated himself for that purpose was understood to be closer to the ultimate goal. Whatever the actual enactment of this ideal, it never totally disappeared as the ultimate yardstick for the evaluation of one's spiritual standing. At the same time though, there is significant evidence that attitudes toward radical virtuosi in Theravada Buddhist countries could very much vary: they could inspire suspicion and disapproval as well as the greatest veneration.<sup>29</sup> In a sense, these radical virtuosi might be said to present a threat to the *modus vivendi* worked out, as shown above, between monk and layman and between the Buddhist ideals and more worldly orientations. In deviating from this model, radical virtuosi appear to have disengaged not only from institutionalized renunciation but also from a division of labor which seems to have become essential to the legitimacy and the workings of the Theravada social order.

It must be noted however, that the ambivalence toward them was never transformed into outright and sustained condemnation and that radical virtuosi never came to embody a full-fledged heterodoxy. One can only speculate whether, given stronger centralization and power of control, the Sangha might have forced them into such a position. Second, while radical virtuosi played a part in the emergence of reformist monasteries and internal divisions of the Sangha,<sup>30</sup> their influence appears to have never reached beyond the Sangha into the wider society and to never have brought about any significant change either in the basic pattern of interaction between Sangha and society or in worldly domains of activity.

To sum up, it is possible to say that monasticism in Theravada countries stands in a highly structured pattern of interaction with wider society and is strongly incorporated into the social order. A low level of autonomy, evident in a state of economic and political dependency, a tendency to become integrated into the life-cycle and into localized frameworks, coupled with a relatively weak stance as a nucleus of political authority, are the major characteristics of this social structuration and incorporation. Even those tendencies in the social field which might have been seen as the most a- or anti-structural, those of the most radical and withdrawn world-renouncers, were shown to be, even if in an ambiguous way, ultimately a part of the overall pattern. An interesting point



here may be precisely that the a-structural orientations of radical virtuosi did not become antistructure in Turner's sense, the latter implying a certain type of fellowship which does not seem to have received much normative or ideological emphasis in the essentially atomistic, individual—if not individualistic—world of Buddhist renunciation.<sup>31</sup>

Further, the disconnection between prestige and power, the impossibility of a dynamic translation of the one into the other, seems to have prevented the infusion of a- or anti-structure, even when of the outworldly type theoretically invested with the highest cultural prestige, into the wider structure. It must be emphasized that this may not be necessarily interpreted as weakness, but on the contrary, as an impressively forceful construction of the interaction between structure and antistructure, allowing the cultural centrality of outworldly symbolical orientations to be sustained over centuries.

Shifting now to the Christian case, I shall confine the discussion to outlining the most salient contrasts which this type of analysis brings out when applied to Western medieval Christianity. As already suggested, Christian monasticism on the whole has exhibited a stronger organizational structure, a much greater level of autonomy and a greater degree of political impact, while at the same time displaying much lesser stability in its interaction with wider society and much greater fluctuations and uncertainties in its overall degree of social and cultural prestige.

Already at the doctrinal level, the position of Christian monkhood appears to be ridden with very basic ambiguities. While the Christian Scriptures repeatedly propound the search for perfection through the practice of ascetic virtues such as chastity, poverty, meekness, etc., monkhood as such remains an historical development with much less unequivocal doctrinal anchoring than in Buddhism. A distinction between the perfect and the ordinary Christian, and between precepts (for all) and counsels of perfection (for a minority) appears very early in Christianity, but it never led to the articulation of a fully-fledged dual standard between them. A major reason for this is to be found in Christianity's strongly inclusive, universal Church-like leanings clashing with its inner perfectionist, elitist tendencies. No less important might have been the overshadowing primacy of the distinction between clergy and laity, where the determinant criterion would not be the search for perfection but rather the administration of the sacraments. But a further reason is perhaps that the definition of both the way to perfection and of the Church itself remained rich in unclarities, ambiguities and contradictions, offering a wide range of possible interpretations and historical developments.<sup>32</sup>

Very broadly, Christianity displays a very characteristic intertwining of strongly 'other-worldly' and more worldly orientations, as already epitomized in the doctrine of the person of Christ—as truly and fully both man and God—



but also at work in very basic concepts such as the Kingdom of God, the City of God, and of course, the Church itself. As a matter of fact, the history of Christianity is often told as a gradual 'unpacking' of this otherworldly/worldly Christian 'package-deal' and as the progressive weakening of otherworldliness at the expense of increasing worldly orientations.<sup>33</sup> As for the search for perfection itself, it too was ridden from the very start with very basic dilemmas such as the relative emphasis and the precise meaning to be given to contemplation, mortification, poverty, learning, good works, pastoral functions, individual prayer, liturgical functions, and manual work.<sup>34</sup> Underlying and adding to these specific dilemmas was also the perennial, more general tension between the lesser and more 'other-worldly' tendencies just mentioned above, often couched in terms of the tension between a *vita contemplativa* and a *vita activa*. The Benedictine Rule with its specific, if not always unequivocal, combination of these various elements, would increasingly provide monasticism, from the 6th century on, with a quasi-dominant normative framework. The Rule itself, however, would receive varying interpretations, even if more often than not, in the name of a return to a 'purer' enactment of its original injunctions. At any rate, it would not be able to prevent the constant emergence of trends, within and without the monastic world, each cleaving to different emphases and combinations within this very broad range of ideological and institutional dilemmas. The issue of 'poverty' especially would acquire crucial importance from the 11th to the 13th century, receiving prominence in the strong surge of eremitic and apostolic movements<sup>35</sup> throughout that period and of the mendicant orders in the 13th century, which would ultimately undermine the supremacy of the traditional monastic model.

Christian theologians did develop in time conceptions which might appear, at first sight, as quite close to a double-standard, articulating the relationship between virtuosi and others in terms of a quasi division of labour, assigning specific functions to virtuosi within the collective of the Church. For example, monks were very early perceived as 'crying on the sins of the world', 'expiating the sins of others', 'praying for the world', all implying a notion of vicarious penance which appears as the direct extension of notions originally applied to the relation between the Christ and the world. This notion would be expanded by scholastic theology at the end of the period discussed here, into a full-blown model of the interaction between 'virtuosi' and the rest of the faithful. The two key principles here were, first, the transferability of merit from one person to another and from the living to the dead,<sup>36</sup> and second, the mediation of salvation through the Church—a tenet altogether alien to canonical Buddhism. In short, the holier, more virtuous members of the Church accumulate a treasure of supererogatory merits which it is the task of the Church to manage and redistribute to the less virtuous in its attempt to help them attain salvation. This theory culminated later, as is well known, in the sale of



Indulgences by the Church, so vehemently opposed by Luther. It must be noted that it had the advantage of acknowledging the special standing, and even superiority, of 'virtuosi' at the same time as it sustained the key position of the secular clergy in the regulation and supervision of the lay access to the means of grace.

The type of division of labour between 'virtuosi' and others articulated in such a fashion at the doctrinal level give us however a very partial picture only of the actual historical situation, which is one loaded with much more tension and even increasing competition between the various sectors involved: basically, monks, secular clergy and laity, but also, especially from the 10th century on, various types of monks and canons, and starting in the 13th century, friars with their own different orders.<sup>37</sup>

As a matter of fact, the doctrinal model just outlined might be seen as the extreme example of a long-standing, but not very successful effort of medieval society and of the Church in particular to define, or 'structure' the social and spiritual status of monkhood. Starting as a lay perfectionist movement in flight from a Christianity it saw as increasingly corrupted by worldliness, monasticism was bound to be in tension with the clergy of which it implied a basic criticism, even if it never actually rejected its authority. At the same time, the Church could not deny the spiritual legitimacy of a fully ascetic, unworldly life. Further, it would very soon learn to use the special holiness of even the most withdrawn ascetics, inducing them to come back to the world and occupy the very highest positions in the clerical hierarchy.<sup>38</sup>

One might have thought that Church and monasticism would eventually settle into clear-cut differentiated roles, monks totally devoting themselves to a perfect imitation of Christ and the search for individual salvation, while the clergy would handle the *vita activa*, the distribution of sacraments and the *cura animarum*. The actual story, though, is one of constant interpenetration and even competition on most of these parameters. By the 9th century, something like half of the monks were also ordained priests, and the liturgical function, the *Opus Dei*, acquired increasing centrality in monastic life, coming to actually dominate it in the Cluniac order from the 10th century on. As for the clergy, it developed a type of '*vita mixta*' in the order of regular canons—priests taking upon themselves a common life and other elements typical of the monastic life—while popes themselves more often than not came from a monastic background. The emergence of the mendicant orders in the 13th century would even further complicate the picture, since they explicitly took upon themselves the activity of preaching and hearing confession, until then the reserved domains of the secular clergy.<sup>39</sup>

A striking expression of the unclear, ambiguous status of monks is that while medieval society, with its well known concern with the hierarchical organization of the world, formulated elaborate schemes of social hierarchy, the place



of monks in it would very much vary, sometimes being placed at the very peak above bishops and kings, at times grouped with priests or kept distinct, and sometimes much lower or not even mentioned at all.<sup>40</sup>

This fluidity in the definition of monks' spiritual and social status did not prevent monasticism from developing impressively strong and autonomous structures. Organizationally, the story seems to begin here with ascetic withdrawal and flight to the desert or mountains in Egypt and Syria, reaching the West (at first Italy and Gaul) only around the 4th century. It is striking that even at that stage, in what appears to have been a very fluid ascetic milieu where eremitic, semi-eremitic and fully coenobitic forms of life co-existed,<sup>41</sup> ascetic life could already also take on a very structured form—of a quasi-military character—in the densely populated monasteries founded by Pachomius in the middle of the 4th century. Christian monasticism indeed has displayed throughout its history a very strong tendency at self-structuration and organization, either at first in self-sufficient and autonomous monasteries, or starting with Cluny in the 10th century, in centralized orders and networks of monasteries, striving at unification of observance and discipline.<sup>42</sup> Of crucial importance in the building of such powerful structures have been the vows of obedience to the abbot, the existence of irrevocable vows and the commitment to stability, elements which were totally absent in the Buddhist Sangha.

As for the eremitic option, it was kept alive throughout the Middle Ages, and should not be understood as necessarily antagonistic to corporate monasticism, although there could be at times a very real tension between the two and much controversy on their respective legitimacy and rank. As a matter of fact, the Rule of Saint Benedict acknowledges it as the end stage for which co-enobitic monasticism is a preparatory school, and Cluny itself, often considered—if perhaps too easily—as the powerful prototype of institutional monasticism, provided for room within its domains for more withdrawn, solitary ascetes. There also developed, on the wake of the strong revival of eremitism in the 11th century, a number of intermediary semi-eremitic forms of life such as the Calmadolese and Carthusians. Eremitic groups, however, usually quickly changed—often under papal pressure—back into the more traditional, co-enobitic pattern.<sup>43</sup>

Organizational strength seems to have been an important factor in Christian monasticism's higher degree of autonomy. A quick glance at the various criteria of autonomization already discussed for the Buddhist Sangha, brings out here a very neat contrast:

First, Christian monasticism was less dependent on political external forces to enforce its inner purity and cohesion, even if kings or nobles did occasionally take it upon themselves to intervene in these matters, as most notably in the Carolingian era, or in the 10th century when nobles seem to have had a strong interest in pure monasteries to play up their own legitimacy *vis-à-vis* a very



weakened kingship.<sup>44</sup>

Second, monks could work and manage their collective property, which made them much less dependent on laymen for material support. As a matter of fact, they displayed such craft and entrepreneurship in these matters that they became, on the whole, enormously wealthy. They can be said to have played a crucial economic role in medieval society, not the least through technological innovations, productivization and banking activities. It is remarkable that here too, a gift relationship emerged, ad hoc and without any doctrinal basis. This gift-relationship developed on a very large scale, involving among other things huge amounts of land; lay donations obviously played an enormous role in monasteries' accumulation of wealth at least until the 12th century. However, because of their direct involvement in work and in the management of their wealth, Christian monks were never as essentially and utterly dependent on the laity for material support as their Buddhist counterparts.<sup>45</sup>

A third indication of the stronger autonomization of Christian monkhood is that it did not become incorporated as a normal, temporary stage in the average life-cycle. Some connection to the life-cycle may be seen at the level of the very upper strata, both secular and clerical, where young men would be sent to a prestigious monastery for a few years of schooling, or where one might join a monastery at the very end of life. This, however, remained a totally unsystematic and voluntary pattern. Most often, nobles and princes were satisfied by ensuring that they died and were buried dressed in a monk's cowl in the hope of enhancing their chances of salvation.

A last indication of the greater autonomy of Christian monasticism is its general tendency to acquire independence from local units and authorities, its development of broad supralocal and supranational structures, and its tendency to develop direct allegiance to the Pope, thus bypassing the control of local bishops.<sup>46</sup>

Greater autonomy does not mean lesser involvement in wider society, but rather involvement with different characteristics. Monasteries provided the wider society with a number of important services, the major type of service being, it seems, the saying of masses for the donator or deceased members of his family. No less importantly, monasteries, although with varying emphases throughout the period discussed, functioned as necropolises, asylums, hostels; absorbed unmarried women of great families; cared for unwanted children; and provided clerical-administrative help to the princes. They were also important as depositaries of saintly relics, in which function perhaps more than in those previously mentioned, they were significant to all strata of medieval society.

A major difference here with Theravada monkhood is that monks often became involved in worldly affairs as a specific group with specific material



interests which they usually were very eager to protect, recurrently becoming entangled in legal and economic struggles and incurring a great deal of resentment from many sides in the process.<sup>47</sup> As is well known, their wealth became a major source of corruption and created an urgent need for reform. In a no less well-known paradox, laymen tended to bestow donations and protections to those monasteries or orders whom they perceived as 'purer' and 'holier', in a process usually leading to further monastic slackening and need for reform.

The fluctuations in monasticism's status, its relatively strong organizational structures and rather high level of autonomy would become significant ingredients of its greater political impact on wider society. Monks became a major force to reckon with in the perennial struggles and confrontations between popes and kings, popes and local bishops, kings and princes or powerful nobles, or even nobles between themselves. This paper does not intend to cover the whole field of monastic political impact, but rather will be content to point out a number of its aspects which make a strong contrast to the Theravada case.

First, one may witness throughout the period under study a significant, perhaps even increasing diffusion of monastic standards of spirituality into other sectors of Christian society, be they clergy or laymen. This was especially evident in the increasingly elaborate patterns of penitence, originally adopted from the monastic world,<sup>48</sup> the gradual enforcement of celibacy upon priests,<sup>49</sup> the emergence around the 10th century of ideals of lay sanctity fed by monastic models and criteria,<sup>50</sup> the incorporation of lay brothers into the monastic community followed later by the formation of lay third orders, and last, the very strong ascetic tendencies of lay religious movements, some of which subsequently condemned as heretical (the Cathars, Arnoldians, Patarins, Waldensians).<sup>51</sup> Knighthood itself is often analysed nowadays as entailing, at some stage of its development, a strong element of 'monastization of the warrior',<sup>52</sup> and a number of kings were clearly under the strong impact of monastic values (Robert and Louis the Pious, Henri III, Edward the Confessor) or had monks among their closest friends and counsellors.

Second, monasticism displayed a tremendous impact on the whole structure of Christian society throughout what is called the Gregorian Reform (1046-1122), where the alliance between monasticism and papacy seems to have reached its peak in the attempt to impose as total as possible an overlap between Church and society through the subordination of secular authorities and the general raising of Christian standards of behavior for all. Some have even been tempted to see in this period as much a revolutionary turning point in the history of Western civilization as the Reformation itself,<sup>53</sup> and one might be reminded of Luther's later attempt to 'turn the world into a huge monastery'. While this would definitely be an exaggerated analogy and while recent



studies of the period have brought out, among else, that one has to distinguish between the earlier and later stages of the Gregorian era, and that the intentions of abbots and popes did not necessarily coincide,<sup>54</sup> it nevertheless remains that the very fact of such a tight alliance between them, and of the systematic attempt to bring the ascetic, monastic impulse into the world represent a type of phenomena unknown in the history of Theravada Buddhist monasticism.

It is remarkable that a most withdrawn eremitic type of ascete, as epitomized for example in the figure of Peter Damian, could be made a part of these far-reaching political processes, being induced to join the reforming effort and propelled for this purpose at the very highest of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.<sup>55</sup> This is only one striking example of a more general phenomenon which makes monasticism appear, at the limit, as very much the game of elites: in this 'game', nobles accounted for a great part of the monastic population itself and were predominant among its leadership,<sup>56</sup> kings either had themselves monkish tendencies and/or monks in their closest entourage, abbots developed tight connections to the very top secular and clerical elites, and many of the powerful clerical elite came from monastic background and not infrequently kept the custom of temporary periods of monastic or even eremitic retreat. Saint Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux and born to a knightly family, is here of course the inordinately evocative figure, being not only spiritual leader to the Cistercian order but also many would say, powerful enough to be able to influence the fate of popes and even Christendom as a whole in his time.

All this brings us thus to a very basic contrast between Christian and Buddhist monasticism concerning the connection between prestige and power and structure and antistructure. While monasticism's spiritual status and social prestige was less solidly entrenched, more given to uncertainties and fluctuations in medieval Catholicism, this prestige could much more easily become connected to, and translated into power: this is evident from the inside, in its generally higher level of organizational strength and autonomy, and from the outside, in its stronger political impact on wider society, or in other words, in the greater possibility of infusion of monastic antistructural influences into the wider structure.

The term antistructure in Turner's sense can be used here more straightforwardly and with less caution since together, and perhaps in contradiction with the type of dialectical affinity which monasticism displayed to the structures of authority extant in wider society, it was also characterized by a significant potential of anti-hierarchical, egalitarian 'communitas' type of fellowship. This communitas seems to have been fed and sustained by the ideal of a perfect Christian fellowship. To some extent, one might venture that the many new religious groups and movements emerging throughout the period



discussed all went, at their very first beginnings, through a phase of enhanced *communitas* and antistructure, sooner or later to give way to increasing structuration and institutionalization. But '*communitas*' came out the clearest, it may be said, precisely in the eremitic, semi-eremitic and apostolic movements of the 11th and 12th centuries which actually overflowed the boundaries of traditional monasticism by giving back its centrality not only to the ideal of poverty, but also, and this is somewhat less emphasized in the literature, to the ideal of Christian *fellowship* in poverty. It might have emerged in its least structured—and thus automatically, least documented—form in the wandering eremitic groups of the 12th century.<sup>57</sup> Its traces can also be found later, for example in the Fraticelli or the Apostolic Brethren—already offshoots not of monastic, but rather mendicant, Franciscan spirituality—where it merged with a strong millenarian orientation which would lead them, eventually, to the brink of heresy.<sup>58</sup> But seeds of '*communitas*' might also be seen as present in the more traditional conceptions of the monastery as the perfect community and the closest to the ideal of the early Church. These intertwined conceptions, both of *communitas* and community, seem to have received much less emphasis in Theravada Buddhist monasticism, where neither the individual nor the community as such were important principles in the monastic structuration of antistructure.

In conclusion, monastic opting out has clearly undergone extensive institutionalization and structuration in both Medieval Catholicism and Theravada Buddhism. Structuration was assessed here not only from within the monastic institution but also from 'without', i.e. from the point of view of its position within a wider social field. Adopting such a perspective has made it possible to underscore that while the Buddhist Sangha might seem less structured from an internal, organizational point of view, its overall social position and interaction with society is in many ways more strongly structured than that of Christian monasticism. By which is not meant that the latter was freer of, or better disconnected from its social context. In fact, its greater institutional strength and autonomy, as was explained, could function as a leverage making for a social involvement which ended up being, in many ways, more extensive and forceful than that of the Sangha. These differences between the two monkhoods could be understood, it was suggested, in terms of a basic contrast in patterns of connection between prestige and power.<sup>59</sup> As for *communitas* itself, underlined in Turner's work as a universal phase in human relationships inherently tied to his notion of antistructure, it was not found to be a dominant characteristic of the monastic setting in either case, and might even be seen as given to the influence of ideological variables, facilitating its emergence in the Christian ascetic tradition while rather hindering it in the Theravada world of renunciation.

The main thrust of this paper indeed has been to emphasize both structure



and antistructure as cultural variables amenable to comparative analysis. A common feature of Theravada Buddhism and Medieval Catholicism was the impressive emergence and sustainance over time of monastic 'alternative structures' retaining in their midst a characteristic interweaving of 'structure' and 'antistructure'. But foci and patterns of structuration as well as of antistructure can very much vary, resulting in a different mapping of antistructure in each society. It is within the framework of such a wider map that the study of the antistructure encapsulated as it were, in monasticism should eventually be resituated.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### NOTES

- 1 See E. Goffman, *Asylums* (Chicago: Aldine, 1961), pp. 4-5; G. A. Hillery Jr., 'The Convent: Community, Prison, or Task Force?', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 8 (1969), 140-151; E. Servais and F. Hambye, 'Structure et Methode: Problème et Méthode en Sociologie des Organisations Claustrales', *Social Compass* 18 (1971), 27-44; G. A. Hillery and P. C. Morrow, 'The Monastery as a Commune', *International Review of Modern Sociology* 6 (1976), 139-154; V. Azaria, *The Armenian Quarter: Urban Life Behind Monastery Walls* (Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming 1984); also related, R. Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972); J. R. Hall, *The Ways Out: Utopian Communal Groups in an Age of Babylon* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978); on the sociology of religious orders, L. Moulin, 'Pour une Sociologie des Ordres Religieux', *Social Compass* 10 (1963), 145-170; H. P. M. Goddijn, 'The Sociology of Religious Orders and Congregations', *Social Compass* 7 (1960), 431-447; M. Hill, *The Religious Order: A Study of Virtuoso Religion and Its Legitimation in the 19th Century Church of England* (London: Heinemann, 1973). Extensive discussion of the distinction between monasticism and related phenomena (utopias, sects) is to be found in Jean Seguy, 'Une Sociologie des Sociétés Imaginées: Monachisme et Utopie', *Annales E.S.C.* 26 (1971), 328-354 and M. Hill, 'Typologie Sociologique de l'Ordre Religieux', *Social Compass* 18 (1971), 45-64. All these works, however, address themselves only to Christian monasticism.
- 2 On the quasi-untouched topic of eremitism, see M. Douglas, 'Cosmology: An Enquiry into Cultural Bias', *The Frazer Lecture* (Cambridge, 1976), where the hermit is mainly presented as the carrier of a relaxed, back-to-nature, anti-high culture cosmology. Also relevant, if not written from a sociological perspective, J. Howe, 'The Awesome Hermit: The Symbolical Significance of the Hermit as a Possible Research Perspective', *Numen* 30 (1983), 106-119.
- 3 *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (New York: The Free Press, 1951).
- 4 L. Dumont, 'World-Renunciation in Indian Religions' in *Religion, Politics and History in India: Collected Papers in Indian Sociology* (The Hague: Mouton, 1970); id., *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications* (London: Weidenfeld



- and Nicolson, 1970); J. Heesterman, 'Brahmin, Ritual and Renouncer', *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd und Ostasiens* 8 (1964); R. Thapar, 'Renunciations: The Making of a Counter-Culture?' in *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1978); S. J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World-Renouncer* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976); P. Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity', *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971); P. Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); G. W. Bowersock, 'Architects of Competing Transcendental Visions in Late Antiquity', paper read at the Conference on Origins of the Axial Age and its Diversity, Bad-Homburg, 1983; H. J. D. Drijvers, 'Early Christian Asceticism and Monasticism', paper read at the Conference on Max Weber and the Late Antiquity (Bad-Homburg, 1982).
- 5 Detailed discussion of this common feature of Christianity and Theravada Buddhism, although couched in slightly different terms can be found in F. Reynolds, 'Contrasting Modes of Action' A Comparative Study of Buddhist and Christian Ethics', *History of Religion* 20 (1980). See also the recent debate on Christian (mainly early) vs. Indian (and Buddhist) 'outworldliness': L. Dumont, 'A Modified View of Our Origins: The Christian Origins of Modern Individualism', *Religion* 12 (1982), 1-27; followed by R. N. Bellah, K. Burrige, R. Robertson, 'Responses to Louis Dumont', *Religion* 12 (1982), 83-88 and S. N. Eisenstadt, 'Transcendental Visions'—Other-Worldliness and its Transformations: Some More Comments on Louis Dumont', *Religion* 13 (1983), 1-17.
  - 6 R. J. Z. Werblowsky, *Beyond Tradition and Modernity* (London: The Athlone Press, University of London, 1976), p. 85.
  - 6b The only attempt to my knowledge at comparing Christian and Buddhist monasticism is S. J. Tambiah, 'Monastic Networks in Christian Europe and Thailand,' in his *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*, pp. 360-365, with whom I converge on most points.
  - 7 V. Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolical Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), especially 'Metaphors of Anti-Structure in Religious Culture', pp. 272-300.
  - 8 See, among many others, D.H. Wrong, 'The Oversocialized Conception of Man in Modern Sociology', *American Sociological Review* 26 (1961), 183-193; R. Dahrendorf, 'Out of Utopia: Toward a Reorientation of Sociological Analysis', *American Journal of Sociology* 64 (1958), 115-127; W. Buckley, *Sociology and Modern Systems Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1957).
  - 9 In the field of Indian religions, the idea has been applied to individual, rather than organized asceticism. See L. Dumont, 'World-Renunciation in Indian Religions', *op. cit.* p. 46; N. Yalman, 'The Ascetic Buddhist Monks of Ceylon', *Ethnology* 1 (1962), 315-328; Werblowsky, *Beyond Tradition and Modernity*, p. 89; with regard to organized monasticism, see E. Shils, *Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1975), pp. 121-134; on Christian monasticism as containing and domesticating potentially anarchic tendencies, see L. Kolakowski, *Chrétiens sans église* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), p. 59 esp.
  - 10 *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors*, p. 232.
  - 11 'Canonical Buddhism' refers to the Pali canon, set down in writing in Ceylon around 20 B.C. and adopted later in Burma, Siam and Cambodia. It consists of: Tripitaka (three baskets): Vinaya, essentially the Sangha's rules of discipline; Sutta, sermons and discourses of the Buddha; Abhidhamma, commentary on these discourses. The Pali canon is not homogeneous, but was probably codified for the



most part in the reign of Asoka (c. 272–232 B.C.). Commentator Buddhagosa (early 5th cent. C.E.) is the unitary standard of doctrinal orthodoxy for Theravada Buddhism.

- 12 I. B. Horner, *The Early Buddhist Theory of Man Perfected* (London: William and Norgate, 1936), p. 316.
- 13 Nevertheless, the accumulation of merit cannot altogether be dispensed with, even in the pursuit of salvation. For example, the same amount of merit is believed to be necessary to become a Buddha as to become a Cakkavati, a world-ruler. Buddha-Gautama himself, the latest Buddha, is said to have had to choose between these two possible 'careers'. This is one of the most remarkable examples of how the ultimate in world-renunciation and the ultimate in worldly involvement are both antithetical and intimately connected in Buddhist thought. An analogous ambiguity lies in the all-important notion of dhamma taken to be, in F. Reynolds' words, 'the source of both order in the world and salvation from it. 'The Two Wheels of Dhamma: A Study of Early Buddhism' in G. Obeyesekere, F. Reynolds, B. L. Smith, eds., *The Two Wheels of Dhamma: Essays on the Theravada Tradition in India and Ceylon* (Chambersburg, Pa.: American Academy of Religion, 1972), p. 15.
- 14 The Five Precepts are, in their simplest form: do not kill; do not steal; do not commit adultery; do not lie; do not take intoxicating liquors.
- 15 The tension between these two aspects of the monk's vocation became evident as early as the first century B.C. See A. Bareau, *Les Premiers Conciles Bouddhiques* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955); W. Rahula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon* (Cunasena: Colombo, 1956), p. 158.
- 16 Even Buddhas and arahats are not immune from these basic dichotomies. See E. Conze, *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development* (Oxford: Cassirer, 1953) on the different handling of the issues involved in Mahayana vs. Theravada Buddhism.
- 17 This term is used here devoid of whatever pejorative connotations it has acquired in Western ethical discourse. Perhaps more neutral from this point of view is 'two-tiered morality'. See Werblowsky, *Beyond Tradition and Modernity*, p. 126.
- 18 I. Friedrich Silber, 'Dissent through Holiness: The Case of the Radical Renouncer in Theravada Buddhist Countries', *Numen* 28 (1981), 164–193.
- 19 See H. Bechert, 'Theravada Buddhist Sangha: Some General Observations on Historical and Political Factors in its Development', *Journal of Asian Studies* 29 (1970), 761–778; S. Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1962).
- 20 Principles of social organization prevalent in wider society clearly permeated the Sangha, most evidently in its pattern of recruitment. In Ceylon, recruitment by caste began to evolve in its early stages of development; monasteries were allocated stable sources of income and landed property; succession to headship of the temple and its property became tied to property and family interests and monkhood became a life-time status to which one was destined by family decision at a young age. Conversely, Burma and Thailand remained true to the principle of a Sangha transcending social distinctions and remaining open and egalitarian in its recruitment, and monkhood retained there a voluntary and most often temporary character. The Sangha in Thailand attained a higher level of formal organization than in other Theravada countries. See H. Bechert, 'Theravada Buddhist Sangha: Some General Observations on Historical and Political Factors in Its Development', *op. cit.*; H. D. Evers, 'Kinship and Property Rights in a Buddhist Monastery in Central Ceylon' *American Anthropologist* 69 (1967), 703–



- 710; H. D. Evers, 'The Buddhist Sangha in Ceylon and Thailand', *Sociologus* 22 (1968), 20-35.
- 21 It has been said that the Buddha refused to designate a successor and enjoined the bhikkhus to do without any leader, letting Vinaya and Dhamma alone guide their behavior. The teaching and advice of older monks is sought, either because of their spiritual superiority or simply because of their seniority, but they retain no constraining power of any kind. Recital of the Patimokkha twice a month, together with the periodic practice of public confession and pardoning of transgressions helped to enforce both knowledge and practice of the rules.
- 22 See Aung Thwin, 'The Role of Sasana Reform in Burmese History,' *Journal of Asian Studies* 38 (1979), 671ff.; V. B. Lieberman, 'The Political Significance of Religious Wealth in Burmese History: Some Further Thoughts,' *Journal of Asian Studies* 39 (1980), 753-769.
- 23 This however did not prevent the Sangha from having tremendous economic implications, albeit indirectly, by receiving in the form of religious gifts a very important share of the population's material resources. For some quantitative estimates (up to 40% in Burma), see M. Spiro, *Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and Its Burmese Vicissitudes* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971), p. 459; R.A.L.H. Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough: Monasticism and Economic Interest in Early Medieval Sri Lanka* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1979).
- 24 On the status of those (*upasaka*) who choose, in old age, to observe ten precepts instead of five, see G. Obeyesekere, 'Theodicy, Sin and Salvation in a Sociology of Buddhism' in E. R. Leach, ed., *Dialectic in Practical Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968). Compare Theravada temporary monkhood (an historical development not provided for in 'theoretical' Buddhism) with the Brahmanical 'domestication' of *samnyasa* through postponement to the last stage of the life-cycle. See R. Thapar, 'The Householder and the Renouncer in the Brahmanical and Buddhist Tradition' in T. N. Malda, ed., *Way of Life: King, Householder, Renouncer: Essays in Honour of Louis Dumont* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1982), pp. 273-298.
- 25 See D. E. Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965).
- 26 Again, this does not mean that the Sangha had no political importance. M. Spiro, for one, defines its role in Burma mainly as that of a 'middleman' between government and people, trying to protect the people from tyrannical rule but also reconciling them with it (*Buddhism and Society*, pp. 378-382); also, sects and individual monasteries competed for the patronage of powerful laymen who manipulated them, in accordance with their own political ends, as did kings themselves. See especially J. P. Ferguson, 'The Quest for Legitimacy by Burmese monks and Kings: The Case of the Shwagyin Sect', in B. L. Smith, ed., *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Thailand, Laos and Burma* (Chambersburg, Pa.: Anima Books, 1978); E. M. Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma: A Study of Monastic Sectarianism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975); D. E. Smith, ed., *Religion and Politics in Burma* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965); S. J. Tambiah, *World-Conqueror and World-Renouncer*, pp. 159-178.
- 27 This is to the extent that one can say that laymen often worship the robe rather than the monk as a person. Even 'bogus monks', i.e. those who only pretend to be monks and actually engage in sinful and corrupted behavior, can continue to receive material support from laymen as long as they are clothed in the yellow robe, symbol of sanctity.



- 28 Distinction emerged between monks devoting themselves to ganthadura—the vocation of study and teaching—and to vipassanadhura—the vocation of meditation. To this was related yet another distinction with which it overlapped only partially: that between arannavasi or vanavasi (forest-dwellers) and gamavasi (dwellers in monasteries in towns or villages). Forest-dwellers lived a more secluded life, individually or in groups, devoting most of their time to meditation.
- 29 See, for contradictory evidence, K. Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society, 1750–1900* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 19, 60; W. Geiger, *Culture of Ceylon in Medieval Times* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1960), p. 202; also suggestive, the historiographic issue of the identity of the 'wayward monks' purged out of the Sangha in Burma in the 11th century, and sometimes identified with forest-dwelling monks. See Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma*, p. 36, 46–52; more contemporary, Obeyesekere, 'Theodicy, Sin and Salvation in a Sociology of Buddhism', p. 38; M. Ames, 'Magical-Animism and Buddhism: A Structural Analysis of the Sinhalese System', *Journal of Asian Studies* 23 (1964), 21–52; J. Bunnag, *Buddhist Monk, Buddhist Layman: A Study of Urban Monastic Organization in Central Thailand* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 55; J. A. N. Mulder, *Monks, Merit and Motivation* (De Kalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1968), p. 41.
- 30 See M. Carrithers, 'The Modern Ascetics of Lanka and the Pattern of Change in Buddhism', *Man* 14 (1979), 294–310.
- 31 See S. J. Tambiah, 'The Renouncer: His Individuality and His Community', in T. N. Maldan, *Way of Life: King, Householder, Renouncer*, pp. 299–320; Tambiah emphasizes that, while Buddhism addresses itself as a wisdom to the individual indeed, the renouncer is also very much dependent on the lay and monastic communities. What is determinant from our point of view, though, is that neither 'communitas' type of relationships nor the monastic corporation as such have received elaborate valuation, whatever their important status as 'support systems' or in the transmission of teachings.
- 32 Some standard loci: Matthew 5:48, 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect'; Matthew 19:21, 'If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me'; Luke 14:26, 'If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple'; Matthew 19:11–12, 'All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given . . . and there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it'. The issues of chastity, virginity, marriage especially would often be at the crux of the controversies on perfection and on the distinction between 'two sorts of Christian', 'two sorts of law' etc. In fact, main-stream Christianity has been led, in time, to favor a rather 'anti-perfectible' stance—denying man the capacity to perfect himself without the help of divine grace—which came most forcefully to the fore in the Pelagian controversy. Confrontation between so-called Pelagian and Augustinian stances on the issue of perfectibility would become a feature of momentous importance throughout the history of Christianity. One can also distinguish between 'more' or 'less' Pelagian conceptions of monasticism itself. See G. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967) where pp. 319–324 deal more especially with monasticism; J. Passmore, *The Perfectibility of Man* (London: Duckworth, 1970), pp. 94–148 esp.; also, D. Heyd,



- Supererogation: Its Status in Ethical Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
- 33 For example, R. N. Bellah, 'Religious Evolution', *ASR* 29 (1964), 358-74. Such a conception also tends to assume, however, the myth of a golden age of 'other-worldly' religiosity. See M. Hill's overview, in *A Sociology of Religion* (London: Heinemann, 1973), pp. 228-251. A recent instance is Dumont, 'A Modified View of Our Origins: The Christian Origins of Modern Individualism'.
  - 34 On this 'uncertainty' of the search for perfection—and of monasticism—already at its very beginnings, see Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, p. 319 ff.; Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome*. 41
  - 35 H. Grundmann, *Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1961); A. Vauchez, 'La Pauvreté Volontaire au Moyen-Age', *Annales* 25 (1970), 1566-1573; T. Manteuffel, *Naissance d'une hérésie: les adeptes de la pauvreté volontaire au moyen-âge* (Paris, 1970); L.K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978); M. D. Lambert, *Franciscan Poverty: The Doctrine of the Absolute Poverty of Christ and the Apostles in the Franciscan Order, 1210-1323* (London: S.P.C.K., 1961); E. W. McDonnell, 'The Vita Apostolica: Diversity or Dissent', *Church History* 24 (1955), 15-31; M. D. Chenu, 'Monks, Canons and Laymen in Search of the Apostolic Life' in *Nature, Man, Society: Essay on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968). 42
  - 36 In R. F. Gombrich's opinion, the possibility of merit transference, mainly, if not only, to the gods and the dead seems to have developed (without ever acquiring canonical recognition) to mitigate the oppressive karma doctrine of man's total responsibility for his own fate. See *Precept and Practice: Traditional Buddhism in the Rural Highlands of Ceylon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), ch. 5; *ibid.*, 'Merit Transference in Sinhalese Buddhism', *History of Religions* 11 (1971), 203-219. 43
  - 37 On the tension and 'competition' between the various options and sectors, see M. D. Chenu, 'Monks, Canons and Laymen in Search of the Apostolic Life'; C. Dereine, 'Odon de Tournai et la crise du cénobitisme au XI<sup>ème</sup> siècle', *Revue du Moyen-Age Latin* 4 (1948), 137-154; D. G. Morin, 'Rainaud l'Ermite et Ives de Chartres: un épisode de la crise du cénobitisme au XI-XII<sup>ème</sup> siècle', *Revue Bénédictine* 15 (1928), 99-115; N. Cantor, 'The Crisis of Western Monasticism', *American Historical Review*, 67 (1960), 47-67; J. Leclercq, 'The Monastic Crisis of the 11th and 12th century' in N. Hunt (ed.), *Cluniac Monasticism in the Central Middle-Ages* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Book, 1971), pp. 217-237; L. Milis, 'Ermîtes et Chanoines Reguliers au 12<sup>ème</sup> siècle' *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 22, 1 (1979), 39-80. 44
  - 38 These processes, with the inner tensions entailed for the individuals involved in them, are analyzed in great detail in Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome*. 45
  - 39 On the conflict between secular clergy and mendicants on the point of hearing confession, see N. T. Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 64-65. Preaching was even propounded by some in the 12th century as a greater path to perfection than any type of monastic life. See Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society*, pp. 250-257. See also fn. 36.
  - 40 For example, Abbo of Fleury would put monks at the very first rank of both social hierarchy and scale of spiritual perfections; Dionysius had set priests and deacons



well above monks, who appeared just above ordinary Christians. Thomas Aquinas would place bishops first, religious orders second, parish priests and archdeacons third. Monks, in earlier stages, were a third order, next to the clergy and the laity, then merged with the clergy when a bipartite model of the Christian social order came to dominate, to be then displaced for a while, around the beginning of the 11th century, by a tripartite order. See G. Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

- 41 Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church* emphasizes this element of fluidity, lability of the various emerging forms of religious life in the very early stages. In later stages as well, there would be an element of lability, individuals and even groups evolving from one form of life into another. See L. Milis, 'Ermites et Chanoines. . .'
- 42 See J. F. Lemarignier, 'Political and Monastic Structures in France at the end of the 10th and beginning of the 11th century' in F. L. Cheyette, *Lordship and Community in Medieval Europe* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968). Some attribute to Benedict of Aniane and the Synod of Aachen (815) a special role in the 'tightening' of Benedictine monasticism's organizational tendencies. See P. Schmitz, 'L'Influence de Saint Benoît d'Aniane dans l'Histoire de l'Ordre de Saint Benoît' in *Il monachesimo nell'alto medioevo* (Spoleto, 1957); J. Hubert, 'Saint-Riquier et le monachisme Bénédictin en Gaule à l'époque carolingienne', *op. cit.* pp. 293-309.
- 43 See J. Leclercq, 'L'Eremitisme en occident jusqu'à l'an mil', *l'Eremitismo in Occidente nei Secoli XI-XII* (Milan: Colloquio de la Mendola, 1965), pp. 28-38; J. Becquet, 'L'Eremitisme clerical et laïc dans l'Ouest de la France' in *ibid.* pp. 182-204; L. Genicot, 'L'Eremitisme du XIe siècle dans son contexte économique et social' in *ibid.*; L. Gougaud, 'La Vie Eremitique au Moyen-Age', *Revue d'Asctique et de Mystique* 1 (1920), pp. 209-240, 313-328; L. Milis, 'Ermites et Chanoines au 12e siècle'.
- 44 On this relationship between monasteries and local nobles, see B. Hill, *English Cistercian Monasteries and their Patrons in the 12th century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1968); P. D. Johnson, *Prayer, Patronage and Power: The Abbey of la Trinité, Vendôme, 1032-1187* (New York: New York University Press, 1981); G. Duby, *St. Bernard: L'Art Cistercien* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979), pp. 31-33.
- 45 On the economic aspects of monasticism, see J. A. Raftis, 'Western Monasticism and Economic Organization' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 8,4 (1961), 452-467; R. Genestal, *Rôle des monastères comme établissements de credit, étudié en Normandie du 11e à la fin du 13e siecle* (Paris: A. Rousseau, 1901). The attitude of monasticism toward manual work retained a marked ambiguity. See A. Guillaumont, 'Le Travail Manuel dans le Monachisme Ancien: Contestation et Valorisation' in *Aux Origines du Monachisme Chrétien*, ch. VII, where evidence is brought for the existence of itinerary Christian monks strikingly similar to the ideal early Buddhist wandering monk despising all work or trade and totally relying on lay offerings. On the more positive attitude to work, as an essential expedient of ascetic life and a sign of humility—but not the object of glorification, see F. Prinz, 'Mönchtum und Arbeitsethos' in *Askese und Kultur, Vor- und Frühbenediktinisches Mönchtum an der Wiege Europas* (München: C. H. Beck, 1980).
- 46 There were, however, significant geographical and historical variations in these tendencies. The *Regularis Concordia* (circa 970) for example, shows English monasticism to display a distinctive, intimate connection with national life and with the king and queen, as well as with local bishops. See D. Knowles, *The*



- Monastic Order in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), pp. 44–46.
- 47 Tithes, for example, were a recurrent subject of struggle. See G. Constable, *Monastic Tithes from their Origins to the 12th century*.
- 48 T. Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977); C. Vogel, *La Discipline Pénitentielle en Gaule des Origines à la fin du 7e siècle* (Paris, 1952).
- 49 H. C. Lea, *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy in the Christian Church* (London, Watts, 1932).
- 50 See J. C. Poulin, *L'Idéal de Sainteté dans l'Aquitaine Carolingienne d'après les sources hagiographiques (750–950)* (Québec, 1973); G. Duby, 'Laity and the Peace of God' in *The Chivalrous Society* (Berkeley: University of California, 1977), pp. 123–133.
- 51 Grundmann, *Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter*; Manteuffel, *La naissance d'une hérésie: les adeptes de la pauvreté volontaire au moyen-âge*; M. D. Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from Bogomil to Hus* (London: E. Arnold, 1977).
- 52 See G. Duby, 'The Origins of Knighthood' in *The Chivalrous Society*, p. 158–167. But knightly values have also penetrated the monastic world. The ideals of monasticism and knighthood merged in the Order of the Templars supported, at its origins, by Bernard of Clairvaux. See 'In Praise of the New Knighthood' pp. 125–168 in Bernard of Clairvaux, *Treatises III* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1977) and the Introduction by R. J. Z. Werblowsky. Cistercian monasticism itself is infused with religiously transposed 'knightly' values. See G. Duby, *Saint Bernard: l'Art Cistercien*, p. 77–82, 150 ff.; a variant of this thesis has even been applied to Benedictine monasticism in general. See B. H. Rosenwein and L. K. Little, 'Social Meaning in Monastic and Mendicant Spiritualities', *Past and Present* 63 (1974), p. 15.
- 53 See N. F. Cantor, 'The Crisis of Western Monasticism, 1050–1130'.
- 54 This is especially emphasized in H. J. White, 'The Gregorian Ideal and Saint Bernard of Clairvaux', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 21 (1960), 321–348.
- 55 B. Hamilton, 'St Pierre Damien et les mouvements monastiques de son temps' in *Monastic Reform, Catharism and the Crusades* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1979), pp. 177–202; J. Leclercq, *Pierre Damien, Ermite et Homme d'Eglise* (Rome, 1960).
- 56 See J. Wollasch, 'Parente noble et monachisme réformateur: Observations sur les 'Conversions' a la vie monastique aux 11e et 12e siècles', *Revue Historique* 535 (1980), 3–24. On an earlier stage, F. Prinz, 'Mönchtum und Frühmittelalterliche Adelsgesellschaft im Spiegel der Hagiographie' in *Askese und Kultur*, p. 75–86.
- 57 J. Becquet, 'L'Eremitisme clerical et laïc dans l'Ouest de la France' in *L'Eremitismo in Occidente*, p. 182–204; *id.*, 'Eremitisme et Hérésie au Moyen-Âge' in *Hérésies et sociétés dans l'Europe pré-industrielle*, Colloque de Royaumont (Paris: Mouton, 1968), pp. 139–145. While hermits could easily arouse suspicions of heresy, Becquet is of the opinion that, historically, they did not display any special predisposition to heresy. But then of course, the problem of documentation remains as well as that of the definition, doctrinal vs. sociological, of heresy.
- 58 On the Fraticelli and related movements, see for example Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, pp. 182–208; M. D. Lambert, *Franciscan Poverty: The Doctrine of the Absolute Poverty of Christ and the Apostles in the Franciscan Order 1210–1323* (London: SPCK, 1961); G. Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle-Ages: The Relation of Heterodoxy to Dissent, c. 1250–1450* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1967), pp. 167–238.



- 59 Admittedly though, criteria of autonomy or power can vary, and those used here—in accordance with Turner's own definition of 'structure'—were mainly and perhaps overly formal and institutional. What was said for example concerning the stronger diffusion of monastic standards of spirituality into wider society in the Christian case is clearly not enough to assess the overall cultural impact and authority of monkhood which might indeed appear to be greater in Theravada Buddhism if judged according to a different set of criteria.

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# THE REACTION TO ENTHUSIASM IN THE 17th CENTURY

## FROM ANTISTRUCTURE TO STRUCTURE

**Michael Heyd**

As a historian entering the temple of anthropology, I wish to start with a few preliminary remarks. I became acquainted with the work of Professor Turner as I began working on the reaction to enthusiasm in the 17th century, and as I was looking for conceptual frameworks within which to interpret that phenomenon. I must confess that the encounter with Turner's key concepts—structure, *communitas*, liminality—was one of the most exciting intellectual experiences I had in the course of that search, since it provided me with new understanding not only of my specific topic, but of cultural phenomena far beyond my area of study.<sup>1</sup> What I can offer in this paper are some tentative thoughts—still in the process of formation—concerning on the one hand, the application of Professor Turner's concepts to the issue of enthusiasm, and on the other, the contribution such a historical study can make towards elucidating some theoretical questions.

Most historians have followed contemporary critics of 'enthusiasm' in assuming that it was a well defined phenomenon with a continuous history going back to the Montanist heretical sect of the second century A.D. The famous book of the Catholic historian, R. A. Knox, is written on the basis of this assumption, and with a critical vein which is typical to spokesmen of the established Churches who fought 'enthusiasm'. He defined enthusiasm as 'ultra supernaturalism' and as 'an excess of charity [which] threatens unity'.<sup>2</sup> My own research, however, led me to the conclusion that 'enthusiasm' was primarily a *derogatory* label, not a neutral designation of any homogeneous group in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.<sup>3</sup> It was applied to a broad and diversified spectrum of movements and individuals: to radical sects such as the German Anabaptists, the English Quakers or the Dutch Collegiants, to Millenarian movements like the Fifth Monarchy Men in England or the French Huguenot Prophets who spread in Europe from Southern France after 1700, but also to more loosely defined movements like the Puritans in England or the Pietists in Germany. Moreover, in Restoration England, Catholics themselves were accused of 'enthusiasm', and on the other hand, critics often



argued that there was an affinity between enthusiasm and *atheism*, and that the two seemingly opposite phenomena in fact reinforced each other. Finally, the term 'enthusiasm' did not refer only to religious phenomena but to philosophical views such as Platonism or Cartesianism, to scientific theories like Paracelsian Alchemy, and to certain literary styles (mainly in Poetry) which appealed to the imagination rather than to reason.<sup>4</sup>

It is therefore in the eye of the *beholder* that we should search for the meaning and connotations of the term 'enthusiasm.' The most common connotation of 'enthusiasm' had to do with claims to direct divine inspiration, prophetic power or special revelations. Such claims, whose individualistic and private character was often stressed, were set against the values and verities passed down by sacred texts (Scripture), traditions and institutions (the Church). A related yet somewhat broader connotation of enthusiasm set it against the traditional professions and traditional learning. It is within this range of meaning that the Paracelsian alchemists were depicted as enthusiasts, and likewise the so-called 'empirics' and quack doctors. In this respect, the reaction to enthusiasm may be regarded as the reaction of traditional professional groups to their critics from below. The broadest connotation of 'enthusiasm' and yet the most meaningful in the 17th century implied the disruption of 'order'—social and political as well as religious and moral. It is under this broader meaning that groups such as the Catholics (viewed from the vantage point of Restoration England), the Socinians (who denied the Trinity), or even the atheists, could be included within the category of enthusiasts. The prevalent use of the term in the 17th century, particularly in England, is a clear indication of the challenge faced by traditional authorities in Church and State at that time.

This brings us to the conceptual framework within which the critique of 'enthusiasm' may be fruitfully interpreted. The link between enthusiasm and direct divine inspiration naturally suggests a Weberian analysis in terms of a conflict between Charisma and Institutions, and this is indeed the model which informs—implicitly or explicitly—the work of most Church historians on this topic.<sup>5</sup> Yet, such a model leaves out important features of 'enthusiasm' as it was perceived by its critics, features which concern the *fabric* of society and not just its institutions.

At this point, I have found Professor Turner's categories especially enlightening. Groups which were designated as 'enthusiastic' in the 17th and early 18th centuries exhibit many of the characteristics of *communitas*, *liminality* and *antistructure*. 'Communitas' was of course a central feature of many radical sects; one may almost say a self-conscious feature as the terms *Brethren*, *Society of Friends* (the Quakers), or *Wahrinspirationsgemeinde* (a German prophetic group in the early 18th century) all clearly indicate. The blurring of social



distinctions, the important role of women, the rejection of regular family life (leading either to sexual abstinence or to accusations of promiscuity) and the tendency to throw off clothes in fits of ecstasy are some of the recurring features of 'enthusiastic' religious movements which are obviously a manifestation of *liminality*. The Catholic cult of saints which was often characterized by Protestants as 'enthusiasm' is similarly related to liminality, with respect both to the behavior of the saint and that of the worshippers. Above all, the stress on *Experience* among all those accused of 'enthusiasm' is an unmistakable mark of antistructure. Indeed, the claims to direct divine inspiration may be taken as a search for *intimacy* that could not be adequately fulfilled in a commercial society which had become increasingly impersonal on the one hand, yet ascribed greater value to effective relations on the other.<sup>6</sup> Finally, the animistic attitude of Paracelsian alchemists towards nature and their stress on the affinity between Man and his physical environment, the analogy between Microcosmos and the Macrocosmos, could also be taken as an indication of a liminal position, especially in the context of a culture in which a mechanistic view which stresses the *gap* between Man and Nature is gaining ascendancy.

A certain element of 'liminality' may thus be a common denominator of the various groups accused of 'enthusiasm' in the 17th and early 18th centuries. This in itself is not surprising but it helps the historian to understand *why* such diverse groups as the Quakers, the Catholic saints and the Paracelsian scientists were designated 'enthusiasts.' The crucial point, however, is that the 'anti-structural' character of enthusiasm was stressed above all by its contemporary *critics*. A good example is an analysis by the Anglican Edmund Chishull in 1707 concerning the adverse effects of apocalyptic speculations:

It is to be charg'd upon all bold Enquirers into the Time of the Last Judgement, that they contribute as far as in them lies, to Disturb the good order and Oeconomy of the World . . . To Compute the Extent of this Injury, let us consider it as the Case of any single Person, who, if Providentially inform'd of his Approaching End, immediately becomes useless to the community in which he lives; he straightway deserts his calling and his Station, and casts the things of this World behind him; . . . when Men, who break in upon the Counsels of their Maker, shall pretend to Calculate the Period of the Universe, and to foretell the time of its Expiration, in the midst of Health and Vigour; what else do they endeavour, than, by this Surprise to Damp the Happy Progress of Arts and Sciences, to dissolve Societies, to stop the course of Justice, to discourage the benefit of Education, and to Extinguish the very Hopes and Prospects of a Posterity.<sup>7</sup>

The analogy between eschatological calculations and the experience of the individual, conscious of his approaching end, is indeed striking, especially since it stresses the suspension of 'structure' and the desertion of one's calling and status. It is almost as if Edmund Chishull has been a careful reader of Professor Turner's books. The critics of Sabbatai Sevi and the Sabbataian



Messianic movement emphasized the same point: the fact that millenarian expectations had led hundreds of Jews to desert their homes, their callings, their property, and sometimes even their families—in short, their place in the existing 'structure'.<sup>8</sup> In the early 18th century, the congregationalist John Humfrey expressed the hope that his former friend John Lacy, who was caught up with the French Prophets from the Cévennes and became a prophet and missionary himself, will soon 'return to himself, to his dear Wife and Children, to his Attendance on God's publick Ordinances, to his Private Devotions, to his constant Praying in and Instructing of his Family, to the prudent management of his Estate and Worldly Business, and to the serving of his Generation, in seeking Reformation and the Welfare of his Country'.<sup>9</sup> Could one expect a better description of 'Structure'?

The critics of enthusiasm, whether churchmen or lay intellectuals, were thus not merely defenders of the existing social, religious and political order; they were *self-conscious* upholders of 'structure' *vis-à-vis* the liminal forces which threatened to destroy it. The revolutionary potential of these forces became clear all over Europe but especially in England after the middle of the 17th century.

The defenders of the established order were not just fighting a conservative battle, however. Here I come to the main argument of my paper. Historians, and it seems to me, many sociologists and anthropologists too, have been interested in recent years mainly in protest movements, in radical groups and in the various manifestations of 'antistructure', or at most in 'counter-structure', in the institutionalization of such protest movements, in the routinization of Charisma, to use Weber's terms. But the reactions of the establishment itself, or of 'structure' to these challenges has usually received less attention, although such a reaction may be no less interesting and in the long run, more significant perhaps than the thought and action of the radicals.<sup>10</sup> This is especially true in Early Modern Europe.

What were the mechanisms by which the representatives of the Protestant 'establishment' defended the existing 'structure' in the late 17th and early 18th centuries? Partly these were the traditional means—the reliance on an authoritative sacred text, on existing ecclesiastical institutions and on tradition itself. Scripture was of course the rock foundation of Protestant faith in general and the principal weapon against the enthusiasts in particular. The sufficiency of Scripture as a guide to Christian life made any new inspiration either heretical (if its message contradicted the biblical message) or redundant (if that new inspiration merely confirmed the Gospel). Scripture thus provided a rule by which to examine not only the content but also the very legitimacy of any new inspiration.<sup>11</sup> In and of itself, however, Scripture could be a double-edged sword since the Pauline epistles and the apostolic church also served as a model for a Christian *Communitas*, indeed, for religion as *antistructure*. It was



therefore important to emphasize the time-bound character of scripture and to supplement it by a reliance on the *Church* as the embodiment of the religious order and as the only legitimate interpreter of the scriptural message. Connected with this, especially among Anglican critics of enthusiasm, was a stress on tradition: on the apostolic tradition which sanctified the role of the ministers as the guardians of the moral and religious order, and on traditional learning which formed the basis of the intellectual order.<sup>12</sup>

By the second half of the 17th century, however, these means of sustaining the established order were no longer deemed sufficient. Scripture could not provide any more an unequivocal foundation for an ideological consensus even in Protestant societies; traditional learning (whether of the scholastic or the humanistic variety) came under increased criticism from different directions, and the Protestant Churches were weak in their organization, impoverished economically and more and more dependent on the State for political support. In this context, it is significant to see the subtle but profound changes in the ideological basis of the established order. Especially interesting is the process by which the defenders of the establishment 'appropriated' central themes and symbols of 'antistructure' and integrated them into 'structure' itself.

Most important, perhaps, is the enhanced role given to the individual. Strictly speaking, individualism is not a characteristic manifestation of 'antistructure' which, in Turner's terms, is closely connected with *communitas*. Yet in a broader sense, exclusive reliance on the individual in the Early Modern period meant a suspension of 'structural' social networks. True, individual judgement had always been a constitutive element of the Protestant tradition, but it is often forgotten that in the period of the Reformation and of Protestant Orthodoxy, the role ascribed to the individual was counterbalanced by the central position of the Church and public authorities in determining issues of doctrine and discipline. By the end of the 17th century, this uneasy balance has clearly tilted towards the side of individualism. Nothing illustrates this better than the commentaries on a verse that is perhaps the *locus classicus* of the warning against Charisma in the New Testament, I John 4,1: 'Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone into the world.' Whereas for Calvin and his successors, the 'trial of spirits' had to be both private and public, by the end of the 17th century, increasing stress was laid on the individual responsibility of every Christian.<sup>13</sup> This individualistic requirement was put succinctly by one critic of the French Prophets in strikingly modern terms: 'In matters of so great an Importance as Religion is, Men have a native, inherent and unalienable Right of Judgement for themselves.'<sup>14</sup>

The 'antistructural' claim to private divine inspiration was thus countered by the emphasis on private *examination*, and individual judgement became a principal foundation of *structure* itself. Closely linked with this shift was the



growing reliance on *Reason* as an individual faculty in buttressing the 'structure' of society. The similarities, as well as crucial differences between the 'inner light' of the Quakers and the 'natural light' of reason of the Cartesians, for example, illustrate the dialectic relationship of antistructure and structure in the 17th century.<sup>12</sup> Both 'inner light' and 'lumen naturale' were inherently individualistic and initially intuitive, but whereas the former remained enclosed in the private sphere of intuition, the latter could develop into communicative discourse and was hence capable of constructing a new intellectual order. Philosophers, scientists and Churchmen transformed an element of anti-structure and turned it into a constitutive element of 'structure'.

A similar process took place with respect to the notion of 'Experience'. It was a principal battle cry of philosophical enthusiasts (such as the alchemists), as well as of religious enthusiasts, in their fight against the scholastic intellectual order, embodied according to them mainly in the universities. After the Restoration, however, 'experience' was adopted as a slogan by the established Royal Society but was now incorporated within a new intellectual structure of systematic and cooperative investigation of nature.<sup>16</sup>

My final example of such appropriation is concerned with the influence of millenarianism. The traditional ideological order in European society, as in many other societies, was *past* oriented. Millenarian expectations were always present in European religious consciousness, but as Professor Turner has pointed out, millenarianism is a classical manifestation of antistructure, and as Norman Cohn has shown, it could be translated into concrete movements of social protest.<sup>17</sup> In the 17th century, however, millenarian beliefs penetrated the mainstream of religious and political attitudes, especially in England and may have influenced the construction of new communities such as those of New England.<sup>18</sup> After the Restoration, millenarianism did not disappear, but its radical features were neutralized, and millenial hopes assumed a more secular character, largely based on the prospects of scientific progress and material improvement.<sup>19</sup> The transformation of millenarianism into the modern idea of progress has been traced already many years ago by Ernest Lee Tuveson in his book *Millenium and Utopia*.<sup>20</sup> I would like to argue that this transformation should be partly seen as the transition of future-orientation from anti-structure to structure owing to the modification of structure itself. Indeed, by the end of the 17th century and the early 18th, the confrontation with 'enthusiasm' and antinomian millenarian movements such as that of the French Prophets forced intellectuals of the establishment to forsake the millenarian perspective.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, they retained the element of optimism which characterized millenarian attitudes and integrated it into the moral and intellectual order. In this respect, the reaction of Edmund Chishull we have quoted earlier is highly enlightening: Apocalyptic expectations were not only 'dissolving societies'; such expectations also 'Damp the Happy Progress of Arts



and Sciences' and 'extinguish the very hopes and Prospects of Posterity'. Hopes for the future were no longer the exclusive theme of millenarians, they were now set *against* such messianic expectations.

This transition of optimistic attitudes from a millenarian context to a secular view of history brings me to the next part of my paper. I have attempted to show so far how 'Structure' has been transformed in 17th-century Protestant societies by appropriating elements of 'antistructure'. Connected with it was another far-reaching modification of 'structure' which I venture to call its 'disenchantment' or 'secularization'. One of the manifestations of this process is the way in which antistructure was explained by defenders of the established order. Traditionally, enthusiastic phenomena were accounted for by reference to the devil, unless they were regarded as genuine divine inspirations. Visionaries and pretended prophets were treated as possessed or bewitched. In the course of the 17th century, however, it became increasingly common to view 'enthusiasm' in psychological terms, even in medical ones.

Theologians and polemicists made use of an extensive body of medical and philosophical literature which ascribed visions and ecstasy to *melancholy*.<sup>22</sup> The vapors of excessive melancholy, according to that theory, caused, when they reached the brain, mental disturbances, visions and trances characteristic of the enthusiasts. Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* was highly influential in popularizing the medical theories of melancholy and in linking them with religious enthusiasm. Yet, medical and physiological theories were far from static in the 17th century and developments in these fields, especially the decline of the Galenic theory of humors, directly influenced the analysis and criticism of religious enthusiasm. By the end of the century and at the beginning of the eighteenth, the emphasis shifted from a discussion of melancholy as such to an examination of the role of the 'animal spirits' as the means of interaction between body and soul, and their malfunction was considered to be the direct cause of mental disturbances such as the 'fantasies' of the enthusiast. Together with the notion of 'effluvia', they could also account for the contagious character of enthusiastic and convulsive fits as manifested in the movements of French Prophets in London, for example.<sup>23</sup> In any case, it is significant to note that several critics of the French Prophets and their followers suggested that they be confined in an asylum.<sup>24</sup> To treat 'enthusiasts' as mentally sick meant that 'structure' was equated with 'normalcy', and that conversely, the mentally sick were seen, together with criminals and vagabonds, as a *menace* to the social structure. This fact should come as no surprise to those of you acquainted with Foucault's famous book, *Folie et déraison*.<sup>25</sup> My point is that by including expressions of religious liminality in the clinical category of madness, a profound change occurred in the nature of both structure and antistructure in early modern Europe.



A naturalist account of antistructure was indeed linked with a shift towards a naturalist foundation of 'structure' proper. The confrontation with 'enthusiastic' claims to new revelations led the spokesmen of traditional Christianity to stress the regularity of the natural, as well as the moral and social order. The following passage from an anonymous tract, 'A Dissuasive against Enthusiasm' of 1708 is a typical expression of this tendency:

And consequently we can't suppose that God will break through the Laws of Nature to make another Revelation (for a Revelation is a miracle) when there is no occasion for it, nor necessity to require it; much less can we imagine, that he should break down an Established order of his own Appointment, when there is as much reason for the continuance of it, as there was for the first Institution.<sup>26</sup>

European intellectuals around 1700 still adhered to the traditional association of the natural order, the moral order and the social one, but they increasingly based that triad on mechanistic *science* (versus the possibilities of miracles), on Reason as a restraining faculty (versus passions), and on utilitarian arguments for social stability (as against subversion). Nor is it a coincidence that divine *Providence* rather than Redemption was the central concept in Protestant religious thought at the beginning of the 18th century. Providence provided a metaphysical basis for order whereas the notion of Redemption had a liminal quality, linked of course to a consciousness of sin which was on the decline at that period. Moreover, the revealed message, as expressed in Scripture and handed down by tradition could no longer serve as a firm foundation for the socio-religious order. On the one hand, there were more and more people who had doubts about the infallible authority of Scripture, and who interpreted the implications of the new mechanistic science to mean that no miracles were possible. On the other hand, the so-called 'enthusiasts' tended to over-emphasize the possibility of new miracles and revelations and resorted to a supra-natural dimension in order to criticize the established ecclesiastical order. Consequently, *Natural* theology, in close alliance with the new science, assumed growing importance among official churchmen at the expense of revealed theology.<sup>27</sup> In this respect, I believe that one can talk about the 'disenchantment' or the 'secularization' of the ideological basis of the social order in Protestant countries on the eve of the Enlightenment.

A final question may be raised. To what extent has the confrontation with 'enthusiasm' led to a *tightening* of 'structure', to the reduction of the role of liminality in general in European society by the end of the 17th century? This is an immense question which cannot be dealt with in this paper in any detail. We can only hint at this stage at some possible lines of research. Changing attitudes towards *folly* may be one direction in which to look. As is well known to any reader of Sebastian Brandt, Erasmus, or Shakespeare, folly played a central role in Renaissance culture as a focus of liminality par excellence.<sup>28</sup> By



1700, however, folly has lost its deep religious and metaphysical meaning and was replaced by satire, when it was not relegated to the realm of clinical madness. Indeed, the clinical interpretation of enthusiasm which we discussed above is an indication that certain manifestations of liminality have lost their legitimacy and have become diffuse by the early 18th century.

Closely connected with this development was the change in the legitimate place of *imagination* in European culture during that period. Imagination has been virtually expelled from the realm of religion, philosophy and science and removed to the esthetic sphere of literature and art, and even there it came under some attack.<sup>29</sup> Lastly, we have seen how millenarian and apocalyptic speculations became highly suspect at the end of the 17th century and in the early 18th.

My main point in this paper, however, was to stress the value of examining the reaction of 'structure' to the challenge of 'antistructure'. Structure may not be that static; it certainly has not been so in Europe of the Early Modern period. I have tried to argue that it underwent profound modifications in several ways: by adopting certain themes which were traditionally elements of anti-structure (individual reason, private judgement, future-oriented attitudes), by far-reaching secularization of the ideological basis of the social and cultural order (which included a naturalist interpretation of antistructure), and perhaps by extending the boundaries of 'structure' itself at the expense of legitimate expressions of liminality. In order to understand the meaning of these changes and to assess their significance, I believe we still need to develop some conceptual tools by which to analyse the modifications of 'structure' on a comparative basis.

## NOTES

- 1 Especially relevant for me was Victor Turner, *Dreams, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974).
- 2 R. A. Knox, *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion* (Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 1-2.
- 3 Michael Heyd, 'The Reaction to Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth Century: Towards an Integrative Approach', *Journal of Modern History*, 53 (June 1981), 258-280.
- 4 For references to the sources on which this paragraph and the following one are based, see my article quoted above. See also George Williamson, 'The Restoration Revolt against Enthusiasm', *Studies in Philology*, 32 (1935), 553-79, reprinted in Williamson, *Seventeenth Century Contexts* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), pp. 202-239.
- 5 In addition to the work of Knox quoted above (Note 2), see Umphrey Lee, *The Historical Backgrounds of Early Methodist Enthusiasm* (New York, 1931), and Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1946). For Weber's concept of charisma, see S.N. Eisenstadt, ed., *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1968).



- 6 See on this last point Hillel Schwartz, *The French Prophets: The History of a Millenarian Group in Eighteenth-Century England* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 259–261,
- 7 Edmund Chishull, *The Great Danger and Mistake of all New Uninspired Prophecies, Relating to the End of the World* (London, 1708), pp. 15–17. Chishull delivered this sermon at Serjeants-Inn-Chapel on November 23, 1707, and had probably common lawyers as his audience.
- 8 Gershom, S. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi, The Mystical Messiah, 1626–1676*, translated by R. J. Zwi Werblowsky (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 529–530, 558–559. See also John Evelyn, *History of the Three late famous Impostors (viz. Padre Ottomano, Mahomed Bei, and Sabatai Sevi)* (London, 1669), esp. pp. 43, 110.
- 9 John Humfrey, *An Account of the French Prophets, And their Pretended Inspirations, in Three Letters sent to John Lacy, Esq.* (London, 1708), pp. 32–33.
- 10 There is however one short monograph which deals with the opposition to a charismatic movement: Hillel Schwartz, *Knaves, Fools, Madmen, and that Subtle Effluvium: A Study of the Opposition to the French Prophets in England, 1706–1710* (Gainesville, The University Presses of Florida, 1978). Nevertheless, it is typical that Schwartz's main work is devoted to the French Prophets themselves (see Note 6 above). For a recent analysis of Protestant Prophetism in Southern France following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, see Daniel Vidal, *Le Malheur et son Prophète; Inspirés et sectaires en Languedoc calviniste (1685–1725)* (Paris: Payot, 1983).
- 11 This was the standard argument used against the 'French Prophets' who came to London in 1707. See for example, Thomas Morer, *Sermons On Several Occasions* (London, 1708), Preface, p. ix.
- 12 The most important critique of enthusiasm based on traditional learning was written during the Interregnum period by the son of the famous humanist scholar Isaac Casaubon, Meric Casaubon, *A Treatise Concerning Enthusiasm* (London, 1635). A facsimile reproduction of the second edition (1656) was published by Paul J. Korshin (Gainesville, Florida: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1970).
- 13 For Calvin's commentary on the first epistle of John, Chapter 4, verse 1, see J. Calvin, *Commentaries*, tr. and ed. by J. Haroutunian, 'The Library of Christian Classics', vol. XXIII (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958), pp. 86–88. For the Latin text, see *Corpus Reformatorum*, vol. 83, cols. 345–348. By contrast, Bishop Tillotson's sermon on the same verse in 1679 emphasized the role of the individual Christian in the 'trial of spirits'. *The Works of Dr. John Tillotson... containing four sermons and discourses* (London, 1696), Sermon XXI, pp. 213–215. Continental commentators similarly stressed, by the end of the seventeenth century, the duty of each individual to 'try the spirits'.
- 14 W. Stephens, Sermon on I John 4,1 in *Sermons on Several Subjects* (Oxford, 1737), vol. II, p. 366.
- 15 This dialectical relationship is clearly manifest in Henry More's attitude towards enthusiasm in general and the Quakers in particular. See his *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* (London, 1656; second edition, 1662, in Vol. I of *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings of Henry More*), and his correspondence with Lady Conway in Marjorie H. Nicolson, ed., *Conway Letters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930). See also, A. Lichtenstein, *Henry More, The Rational Theology of a Cambridge Platonist* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), especially pp. 75–80.



- 16 See Thomas Sprat, *The History of the Royal Society* (London, 1667; a modern edition by J. I. Cope and H. W. Jones, 1959).
- 17 Victor Turner, *Dreams, Fields, and Metaphors*, Ch. 7. Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (revised edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).
- 18 For England, see William M. Lamont, *Godly Rule: Politics and Religion, 1603-60* (London: Macmillan, 1969). For New England there is the recent unpublished dissertation of Avihu Zakai, 'Exile and Kingdom: Reformation, Separation, and the Millennial Quest in the Formation of Massachusetts and its Relationship with England, 1628-1660' (Ph. D. Diss., The University of Johns Hopkins, 1982).
- 19 James R. Jacob, *Robert Boyle and the English Revolution* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1977); Margaret C. Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1976).
- 20 Ernest L. Tuveson, *Millennium and Utopia: A Study in the Background of the Idea of Progress* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964).
- 21 M. C. Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution*, Chapters 3, 7.
- 22 The most influential book in this regard was Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, first published in 1624. A convenient modern edition, edited by Holbrook Jackson was published by Everyman's Library in 1932, and by Everyman's University Library in 1972. The medical argument was systematically employed by Meric Casaubon in his *Treatise Concerning Enthusiasm* (see Note 12 above), and by Henry More in *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* (see Note 15 above). On the concept of Melancholy up to the sixteenth century, see the classical study of Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1964, rpt. edition, Kraus Reprints, 1979). See also my article, 'Robert Burton's Sources on Enthusiasm and Melancholy: From a Medical Tradition to Religious Controversy' *History of European Ideas*, Vol. 5, no. 1 (1984), 17-44.
- 23 Hillel Schwartz, *Knaves, Fools, Madmen*, pp. 52-53.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- 25 Michel Foucault, *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Plon, 1961; revised edition, Gallimard, 1972). An English translation of an abridged French version was done by Richard Howard, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Random House, 1965; paperback edition, Vintage books, 1973).
- 26 *A Dissuasive Against Enthusiasm* (London, 1708), p. 13.
- 27 M. C. Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution*. Michael Heyd, 'The Reaction to Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth Century' (see Note 3 above), as well as 'Un rôle nouveau pour la science: Jean-Alphonse Turretini et les débuts de la théologie naturelle à Genève', *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie*, 112 (1980), pp. 25-42.
- 28 Barbara Swain, *Fools and Folly during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), M. A. Screech, *Ecstasy and the Praise of Folly* (London: Duckworth, 1980).
- 29 George Williamson, 'The Restoration Revolt against Enthusiasm' (see Note 4 above).

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# TOURISM AS PLAY

**Erik Cohen**

'Play becomes the root metaphor of the study of religion under the conditions of the 'death of God' (Miller, 1973: XXIX).

At a time when some proclaim that God is dead, North Americans may take comfort in the truth that Mickey Mouse reigns at the baroque capital of the Magic Kingdom and that Walt Disney is his prophet' (Moore, 1980: 216)

## INTRODUCTION

The message of Turner's opus is that whatever its concrete manifestations, the fundamental nature of the 'ritual process' is a universal one. Generalizing the long neglected ideas of Van Gennep, Turner argued that individuals, groups and whole societies move through various manifestations of a basic form of '*rites de passage*', fluctuating between normal, structured, mundane states and their dissolution into extraordinary liminal, antistructural situations of '*communitas*'; these, in turn, eventuate in structural reintegration in the form of a new personal status or social state (Turner, 1974: 80-154; Turner and Turner, 1978: 2-3).

The middle, liminal stage of the process is crucial, since here is given 'recognition to an essential and generic human bond, without which there could be *no* society' (Turner, 1974: 83). It emerges from Turner's writings that this bond is effected through the incumbents' communion, in the state of liminal dissolution, with some 'sacred' transcendent—reality an experience largely analogous to what R. Otto (1959) called 'numinous'. Indeed, like Otto, Turner's concern throughout is with the striking common, universal traits of liminal phenomena, which he discovers in a bewildering variety of situations, rather than with the particular traits of concrete manifestations of liminality.

While Turner's insights proved fruitful for surprisingly diverse areas of research—as this collection itself witnesses—the comparative dimension of his conceptual scheme has been largely neglected. His major comparative contribution was the distinction between full-fledged 'ludergic' liminal, and the more specialized and voluntary 'ergic' liminoid situations (Turner and Turner, 1978: 36). This distinction relates to the transition from relatively simple undifferentiated tribal societies to the more complex, differentiated historical and modern ones (*ibid*: 34-6). Liminoidity is, however, only a weakened or impoverished variety of liminality; its social significance remains



unaltered and so does the nature of the ritual process. Liminality, in its strong or weakened variety, has thus the same 'function' in all societies—tribal, historical, or modern.

The tacit assumption of Turner's work is that all societies do recognize, in their own 'social construction of reality', some sacred, transcendental realm, a 'beyond', with which the incumbents are in communion, in their extraordinary state of liminality. This explains the power of such situations to effect personal or societal transitions in the ritual process. Hence a question of fundamental importance emerges: what is the nature of liminality and of the ritual process in societies, such as the modern, secular Western ones, which are based on immanentistic values, such as achievement, freedom and social opportunity, and whose construction of reality does not explicitly recognize the existence of an ontologically real, transcendent realm, a reality with which the modern individual may communicate.

It is this theme which I want to tackle, using the concrete example of tourism as play in modern secular society.

### *THE BACKGROUND'*

While an earlier generation of social critics, such as Boorstin (1964: 77–117), tended to dismiss tourism as a frivolous activity, reflecting the superficiality of contemporary mass culture and devoid of any intrinsic significance, a later generation of social scientists, guided essentially by a structuralist approach tended in the opposite direction—and identified the tourist as the pilgrim of modernity in a serious question for authenticity (MacCannell, 1973, 1976). MacCannell's ingenious analysis of tourism provided an important correction of the earlier view, but his claims were too far-fetched. In particular, he failed to account convincingly for the fact that so many blatantly inauthentic attractions do, in fact, attract many tourists. His principal explanation, which doubtless applies in many instances, is that the touristic establishment stages the authenticity of attractions, thus creating a contrived 'tourist space', which appears genuine to the unwary tourist (MacCannell, 1973). But many attractions are so lightly staged, and their inauthenticity is so easily recognizable, that one has to assume that tourists must be inordinately stupid or naive to accept them seriously as authentic. Moreover, there is one class of attractions, the overtly staged ones (Cohen, 1979b: 26–28), which make no claim to authenticity, and still attract great numbers of visitors: Disneyland and Walt Disney World are perhaps the most outstanding examples.

For social critics like Boorstin, the popularity of such attractions is just another manifestation of the superficiality of contemporary mass culture. MacCannell, however, would be hard put to explain this popularity, as long as he continues to claim that all tourists seek authenticity (MacCannell, 1973: 600; 1976: 104).



Recently, however, processually (rather than structurally) oriented anthropologists, taking their lead from Turner's analysis of ritual and pilgrimage, set out to explain the 'ludic' (playful) element in tourism which MacCannell missed. Their approach throws new light on the popularity of such phenomena as Disneyland—beyond the obviously 'staged' surface of which they claim to discover some deep symbolic themes.

In an earlier attempt to resolve the controversy between the socio-critical and the structuralist approaches, I suggested a distinction between the deep-structural and phenomenological levels in the analysis of tourism (Cohen, 1979a, 1984). I claimed that, while on a deep-structural level, tourism may indeed be analogous to the pilgrimage, different phenomenologically distinct modes of the touristic experience should be distinguished by the extent to which they reflect, in the tourists' 'desired mode of experience', the deep structural themes. It turned out that authors like Boorstin and MacCannell referred to phenomenologically distinct types of tourists. Here I shall further extend this analysis to incorporate the 'ludic' tourist of the Turnerians, and to distinguish his from the other types of the touristic experience. To do this, a brief recapitulation of my earlier typology (Cohen, 1979a) is in order.

The typology consists of five modes of the touristic experience. The 'Diversionary mode' (ibid: 185-6) was conceived as characteristic of the modern man who, though alienated from the 'center' of his socio-culture, does not seek a new, alternative center. His life is, strictly speaking, 'meaningless', and this meaninglessness also reflects on the mode of experience he seeks in tourism: he travels for mere entertainment or 'diversion' as an escape from boredom and routine, but does not actively seek 'authenticity'.

The 'Recreational mode' (Cohen, 1979a: 183-5) was conceived as characteristic of the tourist who altogether identifies with the mundane centers of modern, secular Western society—i.e. with the work-ethic, belief in technological progress, personal achievement, etc.—but travels essentially in search of a physical and mental restoration from the stresses of modern life. The recreational tourist, therefore, is not much concerned with genuine authenticity, and may well thrive on 'pseudo-events' (Boorstin, 1964). In comparison with, e.g. the religious pilgrimage, recreational tourism is apparently a superficial, frivolous activity. Turnerian symbolic anthropologists have recently undertaken to uncover the deeper significance of such tourism—and it will be their analyses from which I shall depart in the body of this paper.

The 'Experiential model' (Cohen, 1979a: 186-8) was conceived as characteristic of those alienated modern men, who, in the spirit of MacCannell's conception of the tourist, look for authenticity, i.e. meaning (which they miss in their own world), in the life of others: 'The more the [modern] individual sinks into everyday life, the more he is reminded of reality



and authenticity elsewhere.' (MacCannell, 1976: 160). The quest for authenticity is, for MacCannell, essentially analogous to a religious quest, i.e. a quest for a Center or transcendent Reality. Though, in the tradition of structuralist analysis, MacCannell refrains from discussing the quality of the tourist's experience, he leaves little doubt that the tourist engages in a serious, rather than playful, quest: the tourist believes that the authenticity he seeks in fact does exist, '... only not right here, not right now, [but] perhaps just over there, someplace, in another country, in another life style, in another social class ... there is *genuine* society' (ibid: 1955). To be precise: the experiential tourist is aware of the authenticity in the life of others and may infer from it that, at least for them, there still exists a transcendent Center, a meaning-conferring Reality, lost or barred for the moderns, who are hence condemned to live a spurious, meaningless life. But he does not seek to experience that Center directly—rather, remaining modern, he merely experiences it vicariously (MacCannell, 1973); at most he strives to 'museumize' the authentic pre-modern and non-modern into modernity (MacCannell, 1976: 8, 83–84).

In my own presentation of the varieties of touristic experiences (Cohen, 1979a: 189–192), I went beyond MacCannell in that I conceptualized two additional modes: an 'Experimental mode', characteristics of the tourist who, alienated from modernity, engages in a quest for an alternative lifestyle or 'elective center', outside modernity, which suits his needs and desires; and finally, an 'Existential model', characteristic of the traveller who 'arrived' at his goal—i.e. found his 'elective center' and underwent an experience of 'switching worlds' (Berger and Luckman, 1966: 144). By encountering Reality, he also discovers his real self and meaning in his life; he is reborn or 're-created' at the center, like the prototypical pilgrim. While he may not be able to stay indefinitely at his elective center, the existential tourist remains oriented toward it, feeling as if he were in exile when he returns to his ordinary place of abode.

In this paper I shall deal primarily with the recreational mode; but I shall contrast it to some of the others, in an attempt not only to clarify the subtle phenomenological differences between them, but also to relate them comparatively to the varying 'social constructions of reality' characteristic of the different stages of development of the modern world.

### 'PLAYING AT REALITY' IN RECREATIONAL TOURISM

My chief concern in this paper is with recreational tourism. I argue that this type of tourism is essentially, a 'play at Reality'—i.e. the tourist 'plays' *as if* the attractions, (even the overtly contrived ones) represented or symbolized some independent, ontologically present but transcendent Reality—even as he 'knows' that such a Reality does not or cannot exist anymore according to his



immanentistic construction of the world. Moore perceived this clearly in his analysis of Disney World:

Traditional pilgrimage centers evoke the supernatural . . . Walt Disney World . . . evokes the supernatural in a context within which the supernatural has been banished. (Moore, 1980: 215).

The loss of transcendent Reality is perceived by many moderns as the price of the 'disenchantment of the world', the process of progressive rationalization and ever more radical secularization<sup>2</sup> which eventually eliminated 'transcendence' as an independent realm of being from the modern world view. Recreational tourism is thus essentially 'nostalgic', a playful pilgrimage to a by now fictive Center, experienced both joyfully and sadly as if it were real.

My argument concerning the nature of recreational tourism is construed in precise analogy to that of 'play theology' (Miller, 1983), which 'plays theology' as if its subject, God (who is in fact dead) really existed. The essence of both phenomena consists in their 'as if' character: it is this which distinguishes the play of recreational tourism from the mere entertainment of diversionary tourism on the one hand, and from the more serious quests of the experiential, experimental or existential tourists on the other. The essence of the 'as if' attitude of the recreational tourist consists of his playful acceptance of the make believe presented by the attractions—in contrast to the experiential tourist, who seeks to discover 'authenticity', i.e. some ontologically present, transcendent Reality in the life of others. To put it in the language of the later Schutzian phenomenology: 'play', according to this approach, could be seen as a 'limited province of meaning', (Schutz, 1973, vol I: 229ff), set apart from the surrounding 'paramount reality' by spatio-temporal boundaries (Huizinga, 1955). In the touristic 'play at reality', however, the situation of play, which, looked at from the perspective of the outside observer, is set apart from the paramount reality of everyday life, is experienced by the player for the moment as if it were real (Cohen, 1971a: 184–5); indeed a reflection or symbolization of some transcendent Reality.

It is this readiness for playful self-deception, the willingness to go along with the illusion that an often obviously contrived, inauthentic situation is real, or represents Reality, that escaped MacCannell in his analysis of the tourist as the modern pilgrim, whose sightseeing has the obligatory nature of paying homage to attractions as differentiations of (modern) Society (MacCannell, 1976: 42–3)<sup>3</sup>. Experiential tourism is thus a 'serious' quest, akin to that of the pilgrimage; recreational tourism, in contrast, is playfully 'frivolous' rather than 'serious' (Pfaffenberger, 1983: 61). Although, as Turner has shown, ludic activities may accompany a pilgrimage, the truly religious pilgrim never has a merely playful, 'as if' attitude to the 'Center out there' itself, his ultimate goal, which for him embodies Reality. Moore's (1980) analysis of Walt Disney



World as a 'playful pilgrimage center', is, phenomenologically seen, merely an analogy: the differences between a religious and a playful pilgrimage center is as significant as the similarities between them—and consists precisely in the difference between serious theology (i.e. one which proceeds from the belief in a living God), and 'play theology' (which 'plays theology', although God is, in fact, dead).

Even more interesting than the still formally bounded ludic space of Walt Disney World, is the 'play at reality' in some other, less formally segregated situations of recreational tourism, studied by authors who followed Turner's processual approach. Most enlightening in this respect are the studies by Wagner (1977) on Swedish mass tourism in a Gambian resort, Lett (1983) on character yachting in the Caribbean, Gottlieb (1982) on 'Americans' Vacations' and Buck (1978) on nostalgic tourism in Amish communes. Some of the themes raised in these studies can also be found, in an attenuated form, in my study of the beaches on the islands in southern Thailand (Cohen, 1982g). Here the grounds of recreational touristic play are apparently part of the surrounding 'paramount reality', with no markers to set them off as 'mere playgrounds'.

It is this ambiguous status of such places which enables the recreational tourist to savour his experience as if it was 'real'—while subconsciously aware of the fact that it is not so. This insight accounts for the success e.g. of touristic 'paradises': tourists enjoy the paradisiac play 'knowing very well that they cannot be but fictitious paradises (cf. also Cohen, 1982b).

To conclude, students following Turner's approach generally strove to show the analogy between religious ritual and ludic tourism, usually concluding that touristic play assumes in modern secular society a function similar to that of ritual or pilgrimage in traditional societies (Moore, 1980: 207). While I do not necessarily dispute their claim, its too general and sweeping nature led to the loss of what appears to me a tragic trait in the predicament of modern secular man: namely that for him transcendence can only be playfully imagined, but can no longer claim reality. By assimilating the analysis of touristic play to the Turnerian analysis of ritual, these authors erased the distinctive quality of secular 'recreational' tourism as against religious ritual or pilgrimage—which, in turn, derives from a crucial difference between secular modernity and traditional society, based on a religious world view. It is this difference which I shall attempt to explicate and illustrate below.

### *RITUAL, PLAY AND REALITY*

Turner has repeatedly pointed out that there are important integral ludic (playful) elements in tribal ritual and historical pilgrimage (Turner and Turner, 1978: 35). Significantly, however, he claims that with growing social differentiation the ludic element recedes in favor of the ritual element; in the highly



differentiated post-industrial societies ritual and pilgrimage lose much of their ludic character, thus becoming 'liminoid' (ibid: 36-39). Simultaneously, play becomes a separate realm of human activity, which, according to Moore (1980: 207), achieves preponderance over ritual in contemporary secular society.

For our purposes the important difference between ritual and play rests on their respective underlying ontological assumptions; even for the modern religious individual, that which is experienced in ritual or pilgrimage is considered to be real; for the secular individual that which is experienced in play is not—although he may enjoy imagining that it was.

Let me briefly explicate the difference: the prototypical pilgrim at the Center has an 'existential' experience: he is renewed, rejuvenated, born-again—in brief re-created there. His visit to the Center can be interpreted in Eliade's (1954: 35) sense, as a projection of the mythical theme of Creation, a moment of eternity in time—on the biographical rather than the cosmological level. Such an experience is, phenomenologically seen, 'deep'—the ecstatic and mystical encounter at the Center with the numinous or 'Wholly Other' (Otto, 1959: 39-44). The 'existential' tourist undergoes a similar experience at his 'elective' center in the recesses of the Other (Cohen, 1984). His experience is, in an analytical sense, also religious; that of the 'recreational' tourist, however, is not. The difference in the quality of their respective experiences, in turn, relates to the different ontological status of the experienced, from the perspective of the experiencer's own world view.

In the religious world view, following Eliade (1954), only that which is non-contingent is really real. Such, indeed, is the Center as a transcendent singularity in space, the point of penetration of eternity into time. The Center may well be 'anti-structural' in Turner's sense, an antidote to the routine of the mundane world, but it has Reality, precisely because the religious world view admits the ontological reality of transcendence.

The modern secular world view leads progressively to the denial of transcendence, eventuating in the view that there is nothing 'out there' in the recesses of the world but the void (Bell, 1977: 427), which, in contrast to e.g. Buddhism, is *not* given religious significance (and does not, therefore, as in Buddhism, paradoxically become *the* Ultimate Reality). Modern man is thus caught in a Sartrian predicament of 'no-exit' from the immanence of his 'disenchanted' world, while continuing to long for a transcendent Reality. I submit that, just as the 'death of God' theology plays as if a non-existent God was real, so the recreational tourist plays at the reality of a Center, the existence of which is denied by his own secular 'construction of reality'. The success of this 'play at Reality' is precisely what endows this kind of tourism with its distinctive recreational quality—in the sense in which this term is usually used in modern functionalist leisure studies. Such a view of recreational



tourism also distinguishes it, on the one hand, from ritual and pilgrimage—which explicitly relate to an ontologically affirmed transcendent Reality, and on the other, from the mere entertainment of ‘diversionary tourism’—which does not ‘play at Reality’, and which is essentially meaningless.

This interpretation goes a long way to explain one of the outstanding characteristics commonly attributed to the mass tourist: his easy gullibility (e.g. Mitford, 1959). Tourists are said to be easily taken in by blatantly contrived sights; that they accept unquestioningly obviously fabricated accounts and explanations; and that they can be easily cheated. Several explanations have been proposed for this alleged gullibility: the most charitable is that by Adam (1972), who attributed it to the tourist’s ignorance and confusion in a new and strange situation. The social critics of tourism tended to see in the gullibility a reflection of the superficiality of modern mass culture (Boorstin, 1964); while MacCannell attributed it to the prevarications of a tourist establishment which cunningly ‘staged authenticity’ (MacCannell, 1973; cf. Loeb, 1977). The approach here proposed permits an alternative interpretation which makes superfluous a recourse to either the tourist’s ignorance and superficiality, or the cunning of the touristic establishment. The playful attitude of the recreational tourist creates a predisposition to believe, akin to that found in a theatrical audience which is wholly involved with the action on the stage. Both involve a suspension of disbelief, a readiness to give oneself up to the experience. There is, however, a crucial difference: in the theatrical performance, the separation of the playful situation from its surroundings is institutionalized; the concrete expression of such institutionalization is the spatio-temporal separation of the performance from the surrounding mundane ‘paramount reality’. Such a separation still exists in some overtly staged tourist attractions, such as the Disneylands, which are ‘bounded liminal spaces’ (Moore, 1980: 216) and whose playful character is openly acknowledged. The distinguishing characteristics of covertly staged touristic attractions, however, is precisely that they are not, or, at least superficially, appear not to be, so separated from the surrounding environment—rather they are, or are made to appear, an integral part of it. Their touristic attractiveness consists precisely of their appearance *as if* they were real; though they may be half aware of their staged character, recreational tourists playfully accept their apparent reality. The tourist ‘believes’, not because he is ignorant, superficial or cheated, but in order to playfully experience that apparent reality—and through them a transcendent Reality beyond, which is symbolized or embodied by the attractions. Only thus can we understand the success of the game, prescribed by the expert on tourist management, L. G. Crampon, to transform a tourist into a Hawaiian in three easy steps:



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Stage Two—Get the visitor to speak Hawaiian  
Stage Three—Get the visitor to act Hawaiian'

(Crampon, n.d.: 53-4). The steps are accomplished, respectively, by having the visitor put on an *aloha* shirt, say 'Aloha!' instead of 'Goodbye', and make him love Hawaii (since that is the way the *kamaaina*, i.e. the locals, do) (ibid: 53-4). And there is probably no exaggeration in Crampon's statement to the effect that 'probably this visitor is not "acting". He does like Hawaii. He is convinced that Hawaii is a paradise' (ibid: 54). Vacationing tourists in the studiously primitive surroundings of a Club Méditerranée resort and other less formally informal 'touristic' paradises undergo similarly simplified rituals through which they playfully become natives or primitives for the duration of their vacation. Gottlieb has recently put such touristic metamorphoses in a comparative framework in her analysis of the process through which higher class Americans become a 'Peasant for the Day', while lower-class ones become a 'Queen (King) for a day' during their vacations.

C. Graña, in his spirited article on the modern museum as a palace (1971), uses the example of a little known picture by Louis Gabl entitled 'The Peasant Visits the Castle', to illustrate succinctly this playful touristic transformation of identity discussed by Gottlieb: The picture '... shows the interior of a baronial house which has ... been recently opened to the public ... in the foreground ... a peasant woman sits in a monumental and splendidly carved chair ... the expression on her face makes us partners in the game of "Look at me, I'm a Queen!" ...' (ibid: 110). Graña continues: 'The anecdote related in the painting carries two implications. On the one hand there is a mocking of the vanity of princely pomp; kings and nobles are after all made of the same stuff as the rest of us. But on the other hand it clearly proclaims and relishes the glorious folly of playing 'Queen for a day' ... There is an appropriation of privileged glory by the popular customer-invader. But the thrill and the joy of this capture could not be what it is if it did not contain an act of secret veneration for a state of spiritual *and* material splendor which has never in actuality been part of our lives.' (ibid: 110). The last point is crucial, and can be further expanded: in Graña's view, the (recreational) tourist playfully acts out something which in actuality he is not or cannot be. One can generalize Graña's insight and apply it to man living in a secularized world; the recreational tourist strives to recapture and re-enact playfully the sense of enchantment of the encounter with some transcending Reality, even as he 'knows' that according to his own world view such a Reality does not, in fact, exist. In that he differs from the experiential tourist, who vicariously, but seriously, experiences other people's Reality. The experiential tourist 'knows' that there is such a Reality—for other cultures or in other times (MacCannell,



1973: 160), inaccessible to him as long as he remains modern; indeed, his efforts to make it accessible may turn him into an 'experimental' or 'existential' tourist; the recreational tourist, however can only mournfully regret the loss of that Reality, and enjoy its playful reenactment. This, I submit, is nostalgia in the deepest sense of the word. Students of recreational tourism, such as Moore (1980: 211) and Buck (1978) indeed dwelt upon nostalgia as a central theme in the touristic experiences of replications or stagings of the (American) past. But these are only concrete, minor instances of a general and profound nostalgia characteristic of modern man as recreational tourist; a nostalgia which is a modern version of Eliade's (1968: 57-71) 'nostalgia for Paradise'—just that their world view tells them that there is no such place—and the only recourse left to them, *within the confines of that world view*, is to recreate themselves playing *as if* there were—precisely like the play theologian plays *as if* God existed.

#### TOURIST EXPERIENCE AND MODERN SOCIETY

Recreational tourism is the most 'functional' of the different modes of the touristic experience for modern, secular, society (Cohen, 1979a: 185): it permits a playful outlet to modern man's longing for Reality, without endowing the object of his longing with ontological substance and thus threatening the modern, secular world view. He may thus play at what is not, or is not any more, even as he preserves his allegiance to the mundane, immanentistic centers of modernity. Man is thus 'recreated' by his touristic activities, without becoming alienated from modernity.

Modernity, however, has a dynamics of its own: as the process of rationalization and disenchantment of the modern world ineluctibly proceeds, it eventually gnaws at the very centers of secular modern society: the modern secular religions of 'progress', whether in their capitalist or socialist varieties, are eventually undermined by that very process and lose their attractiveness (cf. Weisskopf, 1983: 98). Contemporary 'late modern' society is marked by growing alienation of its members, even as its center disintegrates; it faces the threat of becoming a centerless world, verging on nihilism (Ferrarotti, 1979). This development may eventuate in contrary outcomes: alienated man may either accept the meaninglessness of his predicament and 'give up'—a mood which, in the realm of tourism, leads to the 'diversionary' mode. Or contrariwise, he may strive to retrieve meaning in the face of the threat of ultimate meaninglessness: this leads to a renewed, serious (and not merely playful) quest for novel 'elective centers' (Cohen, 1979a; Cohen, Ben-Yehuda and Aviad, forthcoming). The first stirrings of this renewed quest find expression in experiential tourism: here the tourist seeks to ensure himself of the existence of a Reality—but elsewhere, beyond the limits of modernity. The experiential tourist, however, does not identify with the centers of other people's Reality,



which remain inaccessible to him; rather he merely experiences their lives vicariously, remaining throughout an alienated modern. The outcome of such tourism, as MacCannell (1976: 9, 83-4) shrewdly noted, consists of the incorporation or 'museumization' of the non-modern and pre-modern 'attractions' into modernity. They thus become 'living museums', guarantors of the possibility of Reality. As, however, in this very process of museumization, they lose their authentic character and become progressively 'staged', the experiential tourist loses interest in them. Such attractions, of which the Disneylands are perhaps the most extreme manifestations, become the playgrounds of the recreational tourist, who, since he accepts the modern secular world view, is satisfied with their 'as if' character. The serious seekers of authenticity, on their part, move further afield.

As the consciousness of their alienation and the decentralization of their world deepens, late moderns realize the insufficiency of the merely vicarious experience of the Reality of others, and set out to seek new 'elective' centers of their own; they become experimental or, insofar as they embrace such a center, existential tourists. Unlike experiential tourists, however, the latter do not incorporate their 'elective' centers into modernity—rather they abandon modernity themselves (e.g. Blakeway, 1980; Schneebaum, 1970). Thereby they create touristic models for alternative life-styles, which may in the future attract like-minded moderns. In this the 'existential' tourist who discovered or popularized an 'elective' center resembles the initiators or founders of 'countercultural' movements, such as sects, cults and communes, the emergence of which signifies the transition from an increasingly centerless late modernity into a multi-centered, post-modern, future world. For those who embrace a new 'elective' center, transcendent Reality has been recovered—and they cease to relate to it playfully, whether in religion or in tourism.

To conclude: ludic, recreational tourism characterizes those moderns who have lost their belief in a transcendent Reality and give allegiance to the mundane, secular centers of the modern world (i.e. to the 'religions' of progress, achievement and similar secular utopias), but still long for an apparently unretrievably lost transcendent Reality; it is this longing which motivates them to play at Reality, thus giving substance to Moore's (1980: 207) statement: 'Play lost importance to ritual in primitive cultures and archaic civilizations . . . but in our post modern world (i.e. late modern in my terminology) play seems to be gaining importance at the expense of both organized religion and obligatory ritual'. Playful recreational tourism is an 'as if' substitute for serious ritual in a secular, modern world for which God is dead. Serious, ritualistic experiential tourism to the Reality of others characterizes those moderns who are alienated from their late modern world, as it increasingly inclines towards centerlessness. These individuals seek to experience authenticity in the life of non-moderns, while themselves



remaining (alienated) moderns. Experimental and existential tourism, finally, characterizes those who actively seek an alternative to modernity—an 'elective' center. By identifying with it, they may eventually contribute to the transition of the late modern to a pluralistic post-modern world, in which transcendent Reality will again be retrieved, albeit in a multiplicity of ways.

### CONCLUSION: SECULARIZED LIMINALITY AND THE RITUAL PROCESS

The preceding analysis suggests an important general conclusion for the study of 'comparative liminality': unlike societies recognizing an ontologically separate, transcendent Reality, even structured, liminal (and not merely liminoid) situations in the modern secular, immanentistic world do not sustain a full-fledged 'ritual process'. To put it bluntly: the tourist's 'comfort in the truth that Mickey Mouse reigns at the baroque capital of the Magic Kingdom' is simply not the same as the pilgrim's existential rebirth through his communion with the Divine at the very Center of the world. Mickey Mouse may recreate but does not effect communion with transcendence; hence the third, crucial stage of the *rite de passage* is missing: the reintegration into a new (and higher) status in the mundane social structure. Moore's (1980) and Wagner's (1977) studies do not show that the alleged modern '*rite de passage*', whether through Disneyland or touristic paradise, leads to any perceptible change in the tourist's status in his home society. The attraction may feature 'passages' (Moore, 1980: 212-3), but these lead nowhere; there is no rebirth.

The recreational touristic play may help the tourist return, refreshed, to his mundane existence, but does not spiritually change his life. The playful experience is marginal in the life plan of the 'recreational' tourist, whereas the rite-de-passage is central to the life plan of the religious pilgrim. It is this crucial difference which I sought to capture in the title of my paper on tourism on the beaches on the islands of southern Thailand (Cohen, 1982). But the folksy wisdom of the anonymous German poet of the early modern age captured the same idea much earlier in his description of the 'recreational' attitude to religion of the fishes to whom, upon finding his church empty, St Anthony of Padua turned to preach:

'Die Predigt geendet  
Ein jedes sich wendet  
Die Hechte bleiben Diebe  
Die Aale viel lieben  
Die Predig hat g'fallen  
Sie blieben wie alle'



(As the sermon ended  
 Each turned his own way  
 The pikes remained thieves  
 The eels made much love  
 They all liked the sermon  
 But remained like all (i.e. unchanged)

Arnim & Brentano (comp. 1921: 140)

## NOTES

- 1 This section is a condensed and modified version of an argument fully expanded in my 'Pilgrimage and Tourism' (Cohen 1984).
- 2 This theme will be further elaborated by a paper on the 'radical secular breakthrough' of late modernity; see also Ferrarrotti, 1979.
- 3 MacCannell, following Durkheim, means human Society in general, not any particular socio-culture. This is obviously a transcendent concept, which is, according to Durkheim (1954: 206) symbolized by the divine. MacCannell therefore does not distinguish between pilgrimage to the socio-culture's own Center (or multiple centers), and tourism to the Centers of others, which, in my view, is a most important analytical distinction (Cohen, 1984).

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## MEDIA EVENTS: ON THE EXPERIENCE OF NOT BEING THERE\*

Elihu Katz and Daniel Dayan

The viewing of television is a kind of liminoid activity in which masses of people routinely—even ritualistically—disconnect themselves from their everyday concerns, enter into a protected 'time out', and allow themselves to be transported symbolically elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Ironically, this very domain has given rise to a set of interruptions of itself that border on the liminal. These are the live broadcasts of great events that transform individuated and stratified masses into the *communitas* of whole societies, riveting them not just to programs in general but to the very same broadcast; transporting them not just elsewhere but to 'the center'. The reference is not to the live broadcasts of spectacular news breaks. These have to do, primarily, with accidents: the attempt on the life of a Pope or a President, or the leak in the atomic plant at Three Mile Island. We refer, rather, to the live broadcasts of ceremonial occasions that are preplanned and well advertised. They offer the audience a participatory role and propose the reintegration of society. An example would be the Kennedy funeral, not the Kennedy assassination. They constitute a genre reserved for very special occasions, taking advantage of the ability of television technology to transmit words and pictures simultaneously and universally. It is with such occasions that this paper is concerned.

Our research began with the coming of Sadat to Jerusalem in 1977. Thrilled as we were, together with millions of others, we began to study the event as a case of media diplomacy, in which the media—television in particular—can be said to have made a difference (Katz, Dayan, Motyl, 1983). We soon came to realize that Sadat's heroic visit has parallels in events such as the Pope's first voyage to Poland, or the moonlandings, or DeGaulle's symbolic liberation of Quebec. We then joined these events to others that have stirred a nation or the world: the funerals of Kennedy and Mountbatten, the Royal Wedding, the Olympics, the Watergate hearings, the presidential debates and so on.

Obviously there cannot be a very large number of such events, for they would be self defeating. In pluralist societies, establishment groups of all kinds

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press for their multiplication. They propose minor events such as the staging of yet another national quiz, or philanthropic marathon, or ethnic festival, the bestowing of honor on one of their members. But the media, though not altogether autonomous in such matters, are free enough and self-interested enough, to resist such proposals and to collaborate in the staging of a major event only on the occasion of very high holidays. Totalitarian societies nowadays seem even more prudent. There, authority in matters of politics and communication is undivided, and one senses a fear not only of the multiplication of such events but of their possible failure or subversion. Thus, one has no chance to see the live broadcast of a Russian space missile lest it explode on takeoff, and only a rare chance to glimpse the enraptured throng that accompanied the Pope on his pilgrimage through Poland. Funerals and anniversaries are safer. The characteristic components of such events begin to emerge from what has been said so far, and they will be elaborated below. For the moment, we propose two sweeping summaries about the nature of these events. The one typologies them in ceremonial categories; the other defines them in linguistic categories.

Typologically, we distinguish among three types of such televised events (see chart). We call them Contests, Conquests and Coronations. Contests are live broadcasts of a ceremonial competition between matched individuals or teams, tilting with each other in an arena, according to predetermined rules, often with a referee and a live audience. We have in mind sporting events such as the World Cup and political events such as the presidential debates in the United States and elsewhere. 'Who will win?' is the essence of the drama of such events. Most contests are cyclical events, although occasionally an unscheduled contest such as the Senate Watergate Hearings presents itself for our attention. Conquests are live broadcasts of 'great steps for mankind' whereby a hero—facing insuperable odds—enters the enemy camp unarmed, as did the Pope in Poland or Sadat in Jerusalem or the Astronauts on the moon. The dramatic question is 'Will he win?' and the dramatic action is in the crossing of a forbidden frontier.<sup>2</sup>

Coronations are the rites of passage of great men: their inaugurations, their marriages, their departures. These broadcasts invite the television audience to participate in the process of ritual transformation of the hero from one status to the next, as the mysteries of traditional ceremony harness and canalize the forces of nature, assuring the continuity of society (Dayan and Katz, 1983; Shils and Young, 1975).

Each type of event proposes a different set of heroes, or great men (see chart).<sup>3</sup> Contests, ironically, are the least charismatic. Like the less ceremonial conflicts of the daily news, they symbolize the equality of opposing forces, and above all, the predominance of the rules. They are thus rather rationalistic events, in which the loser is seen to have certain of the winner's qualities.



	Contests	Conquests	Coronations
Periodicity	Fixed (cyclical)	Not fixed ('one time')	Not fixed ('recurrent')
Rules	Agreed rules	No rules (anti-structure?)	Ritual rules
Participants	Man vs. man, etc.	Hero vs. nature, society	Culture, society vs. nature
Odds	Even	Against hero	Against society
Drama	Who will win?	Will he win?	Will ritual succeed? Can we keep reality out? Who's next?
Relation to conflict resolution	Frames, miniaturizes symbolizes conflict; makes other side human too	Invites suprapartisan identification	Reflexive: reminds of basic values of society; gives intermission
Role of audience	Partisan rooting; audience as judge	Invest hero with charisma; audience in awe	Renew contract with center; audience as loyal
Role of TV presenter	Neutral or partisan	Reverent	Reverent
Locus	Arena	Limen (frontier)	Aisle
Somatic contact	Hug	Kiss	Tear
Message	Rules are supreme; victory, defeat reversible; best man will prevail	Great Men live among us; giant leap for mankind	Continuity is assured; Great Men as symbols
Role of performers	Demonstrate character, mobility	Demonstrate charisma	Ritual performance
Analogue to TV genres	Quiz	Western	Soap Opera
Time orientation	Present	Future	Past

While the victor is presented as a potential candidate for Coronation and Conquest, Contests offer the chance of a 'next time' to the defeated side and no more than a temporary reign to the victor. Still, the winners of Contests often receive great acclaim, all the more so when the underdog wins. Recall Kennedy's victory in the 1960 debate with Nixon (Kraus, 1962).

Coronations, on the other hand, put a great man on view, sometimes as the product of ascription, more often as the product of achievement. But this is a great man acting a ritual role, in which initiative is minimized, dwarfed by the august setting of cathedral or cemetery and by the strictness of protocol. Ironically, these are great men stuffed with the symbols of voluntarism, but unable to act it out: the dead Kennedy or Mountbatten are only symbols of themselves.



The arena of true greatness is the live broadcasting of Conquest. These are missions impossible where the odds against the hero are so great and the risks so real, that humanity holds its breath to witness the challenge and its outcome. Consider Sadat in Jerusalem, for example, or the Pope in Poland. Each of these stories begins with the hero's climb from humble origins to great stature, culminating in a deliberate decision—carefully calculated—to try to change the world. In both cases, we find the enemy actually daring the hero to try. In both cases, the hero talks over the heads of his rivals to enlist the attention of the rival's ostensible following—the Israeli and Polish peoples—inviting them to invest him (the hero) with the charisma that will allow him to charm them. Of course, the rivals—the Israeli and Polish governments—stand to benefit too if the hero succeeds. Risking failure, and perhaps his life, the hero offers himself as a sacrifice in the very act of making the journey. In response, he is offered a show of welcome whose pomp and ceremony are difficult to exaggerate. But the hero wants more—and gives more to get it. There is a consequent escalation of demands—on the principle of potlach—and of gestures of largesse.

Thus, to define media events summarily, one can say that, syntactically, they are interruptions of the routines of our lives and of the schedules of broadcasting. Semantically, they tell the story of voluntarism—that great men still live among us and that their heroic deeds deserve celebration. This is the anti-deterministic message of journalism writ large: it is the will and actions of individuals, not of anonymous social forces, that makes for stability and change. Pragmatically, they mobilize, electrify and weld together political communities.

Having introduced the genre, let us spell out, first, what we know of its impressive effects. Second, let us ask how television—a two-dimensional picture in the privacy of one's living room—manages to accomplish these effects. Is it possible, we are asking, that television can do more than make a spectacle of a ceremony, a performance of a performance? Can it really approximate the three-dimensional experience of 'being there'? Is it possible that the experience of not being there is *more*, somehow, than that of being there?

### THE EFFECTS OF MEDIA EVENTS

In discussing the effects of these events, we distinguish among effects on audiences and on participants, on social institutions, such as politics or diplomacy, on society and on broadcasting itself.

Most studied, of course, is the effect of media events on television audiences. There are data from the weekend of mourning after Kennedy (Greenberg and Parker, 1965), from Presidential debates (Kraus, 1962, 1978), from events such as the Superbowl (Real, 1977). But still we know only very little for the simple reason that no good method has yet been devised to watch and listen to people while they are watching and listening to television, although most of us



can contribute at least as participant observers. From these studies and impressions, there is no doubt that the television audience to such events, when they are successful, is markedly affected both cognitively and emotionally.

Emotionally, as we have said, there is a 'sense of occasion', a sense that one is actually participating in an historic moment (Katz, 1980). The viewing is preceded by a normative call that goes up spontaneously: people remind each other to stop everything and turn on the television. There is an awareness, therefore, that everybody else is viewing—that nobody is about on the streets—even though this observation is made from the relative isolation of individual homes. Thus, the sense of occasion is accompanied by a sense of integration, of reconciliation, of postponement or overcoming of conflict.

People are thrilled by what they see: they were riveted in grief for the whole of the weekend from the Friday of Kennedy's assassination to the Monday of his burial; they were exhausted from making love to Sadat in Jerusalem almost continuously for two and one-half days; they were gripped for weeks in the contest, the conquest, then the decoronation of Nixon on live television and, finally, renewed in their faith in the hardiness of American political institutions; they cheered out loud for Maccabi Tel-Aviv.

They do not do this by themselves. People view these events together, inviting others to join them in their homes. Indeed, we think that people actively celebrate such events. People 'dress up' to view television on such occasions. They invite not only family but friends. They serve refreshments.

And they participate. They cheer, and they join in the singing of the anthem, just as they once stood to hear the Queen's Christmas message over BBC radio.

Effects are not only emotional, but cognitive as well. Americans changed their minds about the possibility of the impeachment of a President as they listened and learned from the Watergate hearings. Israelis changed their opinions about the intentions of Egypt, overnight, as soon as Sadat disembarked. A Polish lady told a sociologist-interviewer that the Pope had liberated the Polish language, and that people did not have to talk double-talk any more.

Accompanying these events is the mood of subjunctivity, that maybe things can be different: that we will allow no more assassinations, that maybe the fighting in Northern Ireland can be stopped for more than the one day of the Royal Wedding, that church and labor organizations may indeed be freed in Poland, that peace may be possible in the Middle East after all.

The effects on participants of appearing live on the stage of the world has hardly begun to be studied. A just-published study of Watergate makes the point that the live TV cameras made it all but impossible for Senators and Representatives to act as political partisans in the hearings; they had to respond to the expectation that they would perform universalistically in the best interests of the polity as a whole (Lang and Lang, 1983). Similarly, we



have argued that open diplomacy constrained Sadat and Begin to accept and play the messianic roles that were offered them, thus to give and take of each other far more than they might have done in the closed chambers of their foreign ministries or political parties (Katz, Dayan and Motyl, 1983). Similarly, for the Pope in Poland or in Argentina. These leaders were acting a charismatic script, drawing their power from the people, dropping in from the sky, performing missions impossible. Kissinger was a pioneer in this kind of media diplomacy.

The effect on institutions is to create the expectation of openness. That the nature of primary campaigning or political conventions should have been affected by live broadcasting is obvious perhaps. But this is no less true for diplomacy, as Abba Eban (1983) has shown. And even less obvious is that live broadcasting has changed the character of certain sports.

Society uses media events for the management of conflict (see chart). Contests miniaturize and frame conflicts; coronations propose time out to recall the hallowed traditions and the glorious continuity which unite us; conquests overcome partisanship by joining rival voices in admiration of superhuman achievement worthy of universal admiration.

Broadcasting itself is affected too. Media events give broadcasters the assurance that they are inside, not outside, the establishment. In the eyes of the public, and in their own eyes, they are the narrators of live history. Like the audience, broadcasters celebrate these events endowing them with so much sanctity and significance that all regularly scheduled programs, and all advertising, are cancelled for the occasion.

### *HOW DOES TELEVISION DO THIS?*

Let us now ask how television brings this all about? How can the broadcasts of ceremonial occasions evoke so much emotion, so much awe, so much change? How can it substitute for the real thing? How can it compensate the viewer for not being there?

In parentheses, we should note that we often compare the experience of being there with the experience of viewing. Obviously, this is a very misleading comparison since few of us can actually attend an event that is any distance from our homes. What is more interesting is that certain events cannot be attended by anybody at all. Even the richest and most passionate fan cannot have been on the moon to greet the astronauts as they arrived, or to participate in the dramatic Election Night vigil in the TV studios or to see the debate between Nixon and Kennedy when one was in New York and the other in California.

Speculating on why and when people prefer actually to attend an event—when they have the opportunity—brings the following thoughts to mind: some people go because they think that being there will make a difference; their team



will have a better chance. Some people go for the festive and ludic aspects of the event, for the physical contact with the cacophonous crowds, for the richness of color and sound and smell (MacAloon, unpublished). Others go perhaps, because they can tune in what they like, rather than what the television director likes. Some people go, surely, because they want to be seen or to say they have been, at an event which everybody else is watching from a distance and will be talking about for the rest of their lives.

Yet, it is not altogether clear that people who actually go have a better time. Indeed, the pioneering study in this field by Lang and Lang (1968) suggests that those who were physically present on the sidewalks as General MacArthur made his somewhat reluctant homecoming tour were far less enthralled by the swift passing of the motorcade than those who stayed at home to watch the television reportage of the event as it proceeded block by block, from airport to the city hall.

How does television manage to animate people in this way, to give them a sense of ceremonial participation? We offer here a list of some of the main characteristics of the production (or, better, the performance) of media events that explain, we think, how it works:<sup>4</sup>

1. First of all, television equalizes access to the occasion. Nobody can pay more for a better seat, or spend the night on the sidewalk hoping for a good view of the procession. Thus, the structure of the broadcast audience is altogether different from that of the socially stratified audience on-the-spot.

2. The television audience is everywhere at once. Even the most honored or nimble guest could not be at the Palace and at the Church and along the route of the Royal Wedding at once. By means of split screens, and multiple cameras, this becomes possible. As a result, television must combine the various elements of the ceremony so that they add up: the Palace Guards, the clergy, the police, the army, even the audience on the spot become actors, and extras, for the television representation.

3. Television shapes the story in a form familiar to its audience. It begins with the elementary genres of contest, conquest, coronation, each with its own dramatic elements. More, it gives a name to its stories: the Royal Wedding, with a little bending, could be told as Cinderella; the Pope was performing a pilgrimage in Poland, and in Brazil he was seen as replicating the miracles of Christ (Feldman, 1983). The dramatic coherence of the story is altogether unavailable to the participant on the spot.

4. In each case, television underlines the definition proposed for the event by its organizers, but also adds interpretation. Each symbol is richly interpreted and thus the television viewer knows far more of the symbolic meaning and traditional locus of the event than those in actual attendance on the spot.

5. The presentation is reverent. Hardboiled journalists, known for their professional neutrality and sometimes for their cynicism, narrate the event in



priestly tones.<sup>5</sup> They speak only little, letting the words and pictures speak for themselves, and their narrative tone is a message. This is a very delicate matter, for audiences are very sensitive to the nuances of 'distancing'. In Poland, for example, we were told that viewers of the Pope's first pilgrimage were outraged that the television presenter overexplained the symbolism of the Catholic mass 'as if we weren't Catholics!' Sports announcers encounter such objections all the time.

6. The presentation is dramatic. The sports announcer makes the contestants into traditional rivals, for example (Comisky 1977, Bryant, 1977). The continuity of the story is sustained. TV adds its own material to sustain the story.

7. And the presentation is live. The added drama of the live broadcast—in which anything can go wrong, and sometimes does—adds tension to performers, broadcasters and audience. One has only to recall the hijacked events of the Munich Olympics or the Convention of the Democratic Party in Chicago to know what can happen. (Russo, 1983). Indeed the integrity of the event is so central in the unspoken contract among broadcasters, organizers and audience that broadcasters hesitate to revert to the role of journalist when something does go wrong. Thus, the assembling of protest which gathered in Washington a block away from the signing of the Israel–Egypt treaty was intentionally left uncovered by two of the three American networks so as not to defile the peace ceremony.

8. More important for our purposes, television provides the context for the event. Television ushers us in and out of the event. First it does so by advanced advertising and announcement, then by rehearsal, making us connoisseurs of what is supposed to happen. When the great moment arrives, TV takes us from the routine of the daily news into the glory of the event, locking us into it for hours or days as the rest of normal life and programming are suspended, and moving us back only gradually as highlights of the event are summarized and resummarized once more. Finally, the event signals its close by being incorporated as the main story of the late night news while other news which has been held back is allowed to surface. Television performs the limen, so to speak.

9. The rehearsal allows us to watch critically and with a sense of belonging. This rehearsal function allows even one-time rituals to become both sacred and familiar.

10. We are constantly reminded that the event is historic. Sometimes we are told that it is a miracle. And that we are there.

11. Television provides projects in which viewers can participate even more actively. They can join in the Superbowl breakfast or in the Royal breakfast by reproducing its menu. They can copy the wedding dress. They can place their hands on the television set to join in prayer with the TV evangelist. Television



sometimes shows how a particular home or community is celebrating, or reacting to the event. Television reminds its audience that people can do great things if they try, and sometimes themselves become great.

12. By the same token, television uses the on-the-spot audience to cue the home audience. Without the cooperation of live audiences, events only baffle, as did Sadat's funeral for example, where the meaning of the absence of the 'people', uninvited or uninvitable, communicated itself to the broadcasters and their audiences.

13. Finally, television offers viewers the chance to consider the possibility that real reality—certainly, the reality that will be retold to grandchildren—is not simply happening out there, but may, in fact, have moved, if not quite into the home then into the air.<sup>6</sup>

#### NOTES

- 1 This proposal, made by Victor Turner (1977) is elaborated in Newcomb and Hirsch (1983). Also see Stephenson (1977).
- 2 Conquests, of course, are a special form of contest. Huizinga (1950) would probably derive all three forms—even Coronation—from contests.
- 3 In the paragraphs that follow, we draw freely on our paper, 'Contests, Conquests, Coronations: On Media Events and their Heroes', prepared for the conference on the social psychology of leadership, Bad Homburg, 1983.
- 4 The following summarizes our current thinking, drawing heavily on our field work and analysis of the Royal Wedding (Dayan and Katz, 1983).
- 5 Gary Wills (1980) graphically reviews the priestly stance of the printed press upon the occasion of the Pope's visit to the United States.
- 6 Walter Benjamin (1970), in his classic essay, analyzes the effect of mechanical reproduction on the locus of aesthetic experience, wherein art comes to the people rather than vice versa.

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# COMPARATIVE LIMINALITY

## LIMINALITY AND DYNAMICS OF CIVILIZATION

S. N. Eisenstadt

One of the major aims of the Jerusalem Seminar was to combine the analysis of liminality, as developed by Victor Turner, with the comparative study of societies and civilizations which has been, for a long time, a focus of research in Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> Therefore it was natural that we should choose, as the topic of this seminar, comparative liminality—the investigation, first, of the differences in the internal structure, symbolism and social placement of different liminal situations, of their impact on the central areas of society in general and on processes of change in particular, in different societies and civilizations; and second, of how these differences can be explained.

The first step in such an attempt is the explanation of the ubiquity of the major symbolic and structural characteristics—*communitas*, *antistructure* and the like—of liminality in human societies.

The starting point of our analysis is the recognition of the fact that this ubiquity of liminality—of liminal situations and symbols or categories which can indeed, in different connotations, be found in all human societies, and of the unruly behavior which is often connected with them—is not given in some 'natural', spontaneous tendencies, in a spontaneous outburst of natural tendencies against the Discontents of Civilization. Rather these symbols, situations and patterns of behavior are culturally and socially constructed, and the behavior that develops within them is also so constructed; even if it often seems spontaneous and 'natural', it is a socially and culturally regulated spontaneity and definition of 'natural' behavior.

The ambivalence to social and cultural order and the strong emphasis on *antistructure* or *communitas*, which are built into many of these situations, are as much culturally constructed as the social structural and cultural order against which they rebel. This is similar to the situation with respect to the 'biological' crises of life—birth, adolescence, death and so on—as was shown long ago by G. Homans in his analysis of B. Malinowski and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown's theories<sup>2</sup>, where he has shown that, even if these crises are potentially indeed given in the biological givens of human existence, they are yet socially and culturally channelled.



Such ambivalence to social order is rooted in several basic characteristics of human existence, indeed in some aspects of human biological nature; however, not in some direct genetic givens, but rather more in psychological—emotional and cognitive, to a large degree conscious response of human beings to their perception of some central aspects of their biological nature.

It is rooted in the relatively open biological program which characterizes the human species;<sup>3</sup> in the consciousness of such openness; in what may be called a basic existential uncertainty or anxiety—most closely related to the consciousness of death, of human finality, and in attempts to overcome it<sup>4</sup>—a uniquely human trait manifest in the construction of the burial places; in certain basic structural traits of the human family, in the capacity of imagination that is, in the ability to conceive various possibilities beyond what is given here,<sup>5</sup> and in the consequent search to construct a cultural and social order which will assure, as it were, the overcoming of these uncertainties and anxieties generated by all these factors.

The capacity to envisage the possibilities of a different social order, and the consequent ambivalence to any given social order, are also given, as J. P. Wilson<sup>6</sup> has shown, in the necessity and capacity of man, rooted in some aspects of his biological endowment, to establish 'meta-relations' and to think about them. In his own words:

'... among those primates that we call human beings the primary bond extends over a longer period of time among other primates; and the pair relation, possibly correlated with a different pattern of sexual receptivity, is also more extended and possibly more intense. While each relationship is biologically determined and displays adaptive advantages, their co-existence results in an unforeseen and non-biological factor—the relation between the two relations, which I call the meta-relation, or the relational design. Bonding relations simply confirm the continuity of man with other primates and reiterate his biological nature in general, for bonding is to be found in numerous non-primate species. The extension of human bonding, an apparently minor difference of degree, may be seen to raise a new possibility in man ... (that of meta-relations) ...

... His existence in meta-relation gives a man the knowledge of his own being by subjecting and conditioning his being to the being of others. This applies equally to man the individual and to man as society or community. Man's knowledge of the meta-relation is embodied by him, and for him, in the forms of the imperative we now call the promise and the taboo. These are the objective knowledge or re-presentation of the meta-relational design. They constitute the 'minimum shared presupposition' that allows isolated, individual, instinctive men to understand one another and this is how synthetic a priori judgements are possible. From the possibility that arose by accident out of his evolution, man had to develop his reason and then to face the danger of losing his reason. With his reason he has a sense of being; without his reason he suffers from an absence of a sense of being. It is in this sense, surely that we understand Hobbesian man to have been living in a state of nature, a state to which we fear a return. For there is no suggestion that Hobbesian man was biologically unsound, only that he is



socially unsound; no suggestion that his emotions are invalid, only that he has no reason. . . .'

II  
The attempts to construct such a social and cultural order, to maintain a set of meta-relations, to overcome the uncertainties given in the factors listed above, is manifest in all societies and cultures, in the attempt to construct symbolic boundaries of personal and collective identity, of membership in different collectivities in terms of universal biological 'primordial' categories—age, generation, sex and the like—or in terms of territorial attachment; as well as in terms of answers of certain perennial problems of death and of immortality; to the closely related search to overcome the distinction between the given world and another world beyond it; as well as that—recognized long ago by Durkheim<sup>7</sup>—between the profane and the sacred.

And yet the very construction of such boundaries and of their institutional derivatives and consequences, adds yet another element or component to the human situation which exacerbates the uncertainties listed above and which generates a basic ambivalence to social order—namely the consciousness of the arbitrariness of any such construction; the consciousness that any given order is only one of several, perhaps many, alternatives—including also the imaginary alternative of living beyond any social order whatsoever; or, in other words, the awareness of the fact that the very construction of any social order, while constituting one of the major manifestations of human creativity, does also necessarily impose severe limitations on such creativity.

The awareness of such arbitrariness and limitation, and the attempt, as it were, to 'convince' the institutional order in general and any concrete given order in which one lives in particular, are the 'correct', 'right' ones, are fully portrayed and depicted in the myths, replenish with tales about worlds and creatures beyond the boundaries of the given order. These tales depict the combination of attraction and anxiety to step out of such boundaries; the stress on the purity of the world inside and the danger of the world outside,<sup>8</sup> and on the need to remain within such boundaries, without, however, being able to do away with the consciousness of possibilities beyond these boundaries, and hence also of certain arbitrariness of any such order in general and of any given order in particular.

### III

The consciousness of the arbitrariness of any cultural and social order is, of course, exacerbated by the exigencies of the construction and reproduction of social order, of societal institutions in the more specific sense of this term.



Of crucial importance here is the recognition of the fact which constitutes the cornerstone of modern sociological analysis, namely the inadequacy of the organization of social division of labor, which is inherent in the biological endowment of man, and of the various mechanisms which organize such division of labor—such as, for instance, the mechanism of labor—so strongly stressed by the economists to explain the construction and maintenance of social order.<sup>9</sup>

The Founding Fathers of sociology—Marx,<sup>10</sup> Durkheim,<sup>11</sup> Weber<sup>12</sup>—did not deny the importance of market as such a mechanism (indeed, in many ways, they elaborated some aspects of analysis of the market as well as of other processes and mechanisms of social division of labor) as well as the impact of different aspects of the structure of social division of labor on the behavior of individuals and on the crystallization of forms of social life. But they all questioned the sufficiency of such mechanisms to explain the working of any concrete social division of labor, of any concrete social order. In different ways they all showed how such mechanisms in general and the market in particular cannot assure such working.

They stressed several crucial aspects of social order which, according to them, are not explained by the various mechanisms of social division of labor in general and of market in particular.

These aspects of social order have been, first, the construction of trust and solidarity—stressed above all by Durkheim and to some degree by Tonnies;<sup>13</sup> second, the regulation of power and the overcoming of the feelings of exploitation attendant on them and stressed above all by Marx and Max Weber; and third, stressed in different ways by all of them has been that of the provision of meaning and of legitimation to the different social activities.

They all stressed that the very construction of social division of labor generates uncertainties with respect to each of these dimensions of social order—that is, with respect to trust, regulation of power, the process of meaning and legitimation—but at the same time, and because of this, no concrete social division of labor can be maintained without these dimensions of problems being taken care of. Therefore they all stressed the construction of these dimensions as a crucial aspect of the organization of social order; that the construction and maintenance of social order is conditioned on the development of some combination between the organizational structure of division of labor, the regulation of power and the construction of trust, meaning and legitimation.

But the development of any such combination is not given—it is being constructed throughout various social processes. In such processes the element of struggle and uncertainty, as well as the tension between different dimensions of social labor, are continuously present, thus exacerbating the



consciousness of the arbitrariness in the construction of any concrete social order and ambivalence to any social order.

#### IV

The consciousness of the arbitrariness of any cultural and social order, the fact that such consciousness exacerbates the uncertainties and anxiety rooted in the consciousness of the openness of biological program, of awareness of death and in the capacity of imagination, and the concomitant ambivalence to the social order—are fully manifest in, or tantamount to, the encounter of the charismatic dimension of human life, in its purest pristine form with institutional life, in the process of 'routinization' of charisma,<sup>14</sup> and above all in the limitations of human creativity and the various conflicts and tensions that such institutionalization entails.

The construction of cultural and social order in terms of some combination between primordial symbols and transcendental symbols, in terms of relation to some conception of the sacred, is indeed one of the fullest manifestations of the charismatic dimension of life, of human creativity.

This charismatic dimension is focused, in the social realm, in the construction of the boundaries of personal and collective identity; the construction of societal centers, the centers of society and of its major symbols of prestige.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time, however, the very institutionalization of such charismatic dimension generates also very severe limitations on such creativity and, in connection with the tendencies analysed above, also an awareness or consciousness of such limitations.

The basic root of the limitations on human activity inherent in the institutionalization of the charismatic dimension of the construction of social and cultural order lies first of all in the fact that the process of the institutionalization of any concrete social setting entails the selection from a variety of—potentially always existing or imagined—possibilities and hence it does also entail a concomitant closure; second in the fact of the routinization of the creative act which is inherent in any such institutionalization; third in the close relation between such closure and elements of power and fourth in the tensions that develop in such process between the basic components of the construction of social order—namely regulation of power, construction of trust and provision of meaning.

Thus, first of all, the construction of social and cultural order implies the posing of certain types of questions about the basic problems of human existence in the social and cultural context, as well as a range of permissible answers to them, and excludes other possible questions and answers.

Thus, to give only a few cursory illustrations, any such social construction of the reality usually emphasizes some dimensions of human existence—be it the aesthetic, the political or the ritual one—of different symbolic modes of



activities and accordingly sets up limits on parameters of experience which are seen as permissible and meaningful in any concrete setting. Any such construction of the social order selects certain conceptions of the relation between the cosmic and social order, of man's fate and of the degree to which he can influence it and the different symbolic orientations to the social order and in the very nature of this process it necessarily suppresses other dimensions of human activity or other conceptions of the social order, or delegates them to secondary or subterranean levels.

Second, the limitation on creativity inherent in the institutionalization of any charismatic dimension is rooted in the fact that when an innovation is accepted it may as a result become routine, 'defined', more and more removed from its original impetus. Those who participate in its perpetuation—its originators and their initial close collaborators—tend to become less interested in it; indeed, their whole relation to these mainsprings may also be rooted in the fact that the originators of cultural innovations—of great religions, of new political systems, or of new economic enterprises—may become afraid of the further spread of the spirit of such free creativity, and may attempt to impose limitations on such spread, on the attempts of other people or groups to participate in such creativity or to extend its scope. In this way the innovators may engender among such groups hostility and alienation or apathy toward the very acts of creativity and may generate tendencies towards the destruction of institutions.

Third, the restrictions and exclusions entailed by institutionalization of any charismatic vision become necessarily closely associated with, although not necessarily identical with, maintenance of the distribution of power and wealth, with the limitation of the scope of participation of various groups in the central symbolic spheres of a society, and with access to meaningful participation in the social and cultural order, and becomes closely related to the control over resources.

Fourth, such limitations on human creativity are inherent in the institutionalization of the charismatic dimension of human life; such limitations are also evident in several tensions that are inherent in the ways in which the basic components of social order—namely construction of trust (solidarity), meaning, power and social division of labor—are related to one another in the process of such institutionalization, of concrete institution-building.<sup>16</sup>

#### V

The crucial tension or contradiction here is that between the conditions which generate the construction of trust between different members of a group or society on the one hand, and those which assure the availability of resources and institutional entrepreneurs for the formation of broader institutional complexes on the other hand, and the articulation of symbols which legitimize



them in terms of some broader meaning is greater, other conditions being equal (such as for instance the extent of coercion employed in such situations), insofar as in any situation ascriptive criteria in general and of particularistic ascriptive criteria in particular, that specify first the belongingness to solidary communities in general, and which assure some degree of unconditional relations between its members and clear criteria of mutual obligation of its members in particular, are predominant.

Thus, almost by definition, the conditions which make for maintenance of trust are best assured in relatively limited ranges of social activities or interaction. Such limited ranges of interaction seem to constitute the necessary minimal conditions for at least the initial development of such trust, even if they may not be enough to assure its continuity. At the same time, however, these very conditions which assure such continuity of trust are inimical to the development of resources and activities needed for broader institutional creativity, for the construction of broader institutional complexes based on more variegated broader orientations.

Indeed the very conditions which generate resources which may be available for broader complex, institution-building tend also to undermine the simple or 'primitive' settings of potential trust; in such conditions there arises the problem of how to institutionalize such activities in some stable long-range patterns beyond those embedded in relatively narrow units or sets of social relations.

The possibility of such institutionalization is above all dependent on the effective extension of the range of symbolism of trust beyond the narrow minimal scope of primordial units, and of connecting such extended trust with the organization of broader scopes of activities and with the construction of broader ranges of meaning.

But any such extension necessarily brings out in relatively sharp ways the confrontation of such extended trust with the distribution of power and of resources created through social division of labor and with the legitimation of such activities in terms of broader meanings—thus creating many 'fuzzy' and problematic situations.

## VI

Accordingly, in such situations the awareness of arbitrariness of any social order in particular and the given constructed social order becomes sharpened, intensifying the feelings of ambivalence to it, bringing out strong antinomian orientations and the potentially destructive aspects of the charismatic dimension of human action. These destructive aspects are—because of the charismatic predisposition or fervor—rooted, as we have seen above, in the attempt to come into contact with the very essence of being, to go to the very roots of existence, of cosmic, social, and cultural order, to what is given as



sacred and fundamental, as inherent in this dimension as the constructive ones. But just because of this, such fervor may also contain a strong predisposition to sacrilege, to the denial of the validity of the sacred, and of what is accepted in any given society as sacred. The very attempt to reestablish direct contact with these roots of cosmic and of socio-political order may breed both opposition to more attenuated and formalized forms of this order, as well as fear and hence opposition to the sacred itself.<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, on the personal level, charismatic predispositions may be the epitome of the darkest recesses and excesses of the human soul, of its utter depravity and irresponsibility, of its more intensive antinomian tendencies, while on the other hand, it is in its charismatic roots that the human personality can attain its fullest creative power and internal responsibility.

Just because of this combination of the constructive, restrictive, and destructive aspects it is indeed in the charismatic act that the problematics of potential human creativity become most clearly manifest. These problematics are manifest not only in the fact that this creativity may perhaps in some cases be deranged or evil, but also that it is not only the potential derangement but this very creativity—by its very nature and orientation—which tends to undermine and destroy existing institutions, to burst the limits set by them, and that both these constructive and destructive aspects of charisma focus, in the realm of construction of the social order, on the overcoming of the contradictions generated by the very processes inherent in the institutionalization of the charismatic activity, by the process of the routinization of charisma.

These destructive aspects of the charismatic orientation are often, in their most extreme manifestations, evident in attempts to deny not only the concrete restrictions inherent in any concrete process of institutionalization, but the very fact of institutionalization and of construction of social order and of the restrictions it entail. But even these extreme orientations, the seemingly total negation of the social order, the potentially destructive behavior related to it, the attempts to overcome them, are not just natural givens, expressing some basic presocial natural human predispositions, but are part and parcel of the construction of cultural and social order.

They are indeed rooted in the fact analysed above that the construction of social order involves far-reaching restrictions on human creativity, that such construction excludes many other possibilities of creativity—but not the ability to conceive them.

Hence, however destructive and seemingly spontaneous are many of the manifestations of such ambivalence to social order, yet most of them are also structured around several basic orientations and themes, around the major themes of protest that develop in all human societies and around various culturally and socially structured situations—among them various liminal situations and symbols of liminality.



VII  
The orientations and symbols of protest contain two basic components, out of which the more concrete theme of protest, to be found in all societies, develop. The first such component is the attempt to overcome the basic predicaments and limitations of human existence in general—those of death in particular. The second component of these orientations of protest is the attempt to overcome the tension and predicaments inherent in the process of institutionalization of the social order—the tension between equality and hierarchy; between social division of labor and the regulation of power, construction of trust and provision of meaning, and the tension between the quest for the scope of meaningful participation of various groups in the society in central symbolic and institutional spheres.

Out of the combination and development of these two basic components there develop some of the concrete themes of protest which can be found in all societies.

Thus, first among the themes of protest is the search to overcome the tension between the complexity and fragmentation of human relations inherent in any institutional division of labor and the possibility of some total unconditional, unmediated participation in social and cultural order. Second is the search to overcome the tensions inherent in the temporal dimension of the human and social condition, especially the search for immortality, the tension between the deferment of gratification in the present as against the possibility of its attainment in the future, the tension between productivity and distribution and the accompanying stress on visions of unlimited good—all often played out in various myths in the relations between Time of Origin and Time of End—'Uhrzeit' and 'Endzeit'.<sup>18</sup>

A third basic perennial theme of protest in human societies is focused around the quest to suspend the tension between the model of the ideal society, the principles of distributive justice upheld within it on the one hand, and the reality of institutional life on the other, between the actual distribution of power and the demand for equality. Fourth is the quest to suspend the tension between the personal and the autonomous self and the social role; between the possibility of finding full expression of the internal self in social and cultural life as against the retreat from it.

The fifth theme of protest is that of suspension or negation of the structural and organizational division of labor in general, and the emphasis on the ideal of 'communitas', i.e., of direct, unmediated participation in the social and cultural orders.

Thus indeed the themes of *communitas*, of antistructure, constitute, in every society, part of the map of such antinomian symbols, becoming connected in various ways with various other symbols of protest, rebellion and antinomianism.



Indeed the very concept of liminality, in its emphasis on the going out of boundaries and structuring a space seemingly outside of given boundaries, is closely related to these themes of ambivalence, antinomy and protest.

These themes—with the strong ambivalence to social order and the consciousness of its arbitrariness—became in every society focused around specific aspects and foci of the institutional order—on the very construction of boundaries, of personality and of the collectivity; on the symbols and systems of authority; on symbols and systems of stratification in which the symbolic dimensions of hierarchy are combined with structural aspects of division of labor and distribution of resources; on the sphere of the family as the primary locus of authority and socialization and of the consequent, even if necessary, limitation imposed in an individual's life on his impulses and activities, and as the locus in which those restrictions are closely related to the basic primordial data of human experience, especially to differences in age and sex.

### VIII

In all societies, these orientations of protest are not just marginal to the central symbols of a tradition of a society, destined to erupt only in periods of social disorganization and change. They introduce also the element of potential dissent, as well as of heterodoxy as an inherent and continuous component of every social order.

Such potentialities of dissent and heterodoxy become manifest in the development, within any society or tradition, first of all of a potential great variety of more fully articulated counter and secondary orientations.<sup>19</sup> Thus, in almost any Great Tradition, in almost any cultural and social order, there tend to develop, at its very central core, some ideals and orientations which, while antithetical to some of the predominant basic orientations and ideals of the tradition, are yet derived from its basic respective parameters. Each point to different and seemingly opposing directions, although they may also tend to reinforce one another. The interrelation between the Brahmanic ideal and that of the renouncer in Indian civilization, between the active Church engaged in the world and the monastic ideal in Western Christianity, between the power orientation and the monastic ideal in the Eastern Church, are all illustrations of such contradictory orientations contained within a single tradition.

These potentially antinomian tendencies often become connected with the upholding of those dimensions of human existence which are not institutionalized in the given tradition; with the more extreme expressions of subjectivism and privatization, as well as with the emphasis, even if in intellectual terms, on the symbols of primordial attachment. These tendencies may often emphasize human ideals which are strongly opposed to, or different from, those upheld at the center; the group which upholds them may claim



that it is only within its own confines that the pure, pristine or primordial qualities emphasized in the ideals of the center can be fully realized. Similarly the ideals of equality and communal solidarity may be emphasized as against those of hierarchy, power and unequal distribution of wealth which are seen as being upheld by the center.

Second, they become articulated in the image of the society's 'double', the 'contradiction' or 'other-side' of a society's institutionalized image.<sup>20</sup>

Third, they become manifest in the development of images of the pristine ideals of the existing society, uncontaminated by the process of its concrete institutionalization.

Fourth, they become manifest in the images of a social and cultural order, totally different from the existing one—or even uncontaminated at all by any institutionalization.

## IX

These various orientations and themes of protest, these 'heterodox' and antinomian and potentially rebellious orientations, the attempts to overcome the limitations, contradictions and tensions inherent in the construction of social order and in its reproduction, the images of the society's 'double', are carried and articulated by various different groups or individuals—in a great variety of social situations. Given the importance in all these situations of the playing out of the various ambivalences towards the social order, almost every such situation contains some potentially antinomian and rebellious orientations, even if in some such situations the potential antinomian tendencies inherent in these orientations of protest are checked or regulated by full legitimation and institutionalization.

Thus first of all these double images of the society are articulated and played out in most of the major ritual and communicative situations in which the models of social order are presented.<sup>21</sup>

Second, paradoxically and significantly the consciousness and portrayal of such arbitrariness is most fully evident in the rituals of the center. In these rituals, and in other major communicative situations of the ambivalence to the cultural order, the themes of its arbitrariness, of other possibilities and of their danger, are fully played out, attesting to the fact that the consciousness of such arbitrariness is never fully obliterated; that it is, at least, only transposed to another level of symbolism and consciousness.

Third, these themes are also articulated, as in many primitive societies, in special rituals of rebellion, in which the existing power, hierarchy, and often intersexual relations are momentarily, symbolically and ritually reversed—but in which the potential antinomian tendencies inherent in all these orientations of power are checked or regulated by full legitimation and



institutionalization of the rituals.

Fourth, these themes are also played out in the fully structural liminal situations—the various rites de passage in which the symbolic space between the strict boundaries of various institutional spheres is being—symbolically—constructed. Last they are also played out in a very great variety of more loosely structured situations, such as for instance those of pilgrimage, of play and the like.<sup>22</sup>

These themes and images may also become 'stored' as it were in some social group such as for instance the monks in many Buddhist societies—who serve as the carriers of the symbolic attributes of membership in a collectivity and of its symbols in their primordial pre-institutional level.<sup>23</sup> These themes and images may also become articulated in different manifestations of the esoteric—in private and public life alike—and in the definition of the private as against the public spheres in the definition of purely personal relations, such as, above all, friendship,<sup>24</sup> or they may be articulated in eruptions of chiliastic, millenian messianic outbursts or also become connected with more organized movements of heterodoxy or protest.

In most of these situations some liminal space is created, in which different orientations and themes of protest are played out, aiming, in one way or another, at the reconstruction of the relations between trust, power, social division of labor and broader meaning, and at reconstituting, reaffirming or changing the boundaries of personal and collective identity; the symbols of the center and delineation of pure, as against dangerous, space.

All such situations become through the symbolic transposition of these symbolic orientations, of the awareness of arbitrariness of social order and orientations of protest which take place in them a part both of the ways of maintenance of the social order, but at the same time and for the same reasons starting points for potential social change.

In every society there exists not just one liminal situation or even one type of such situations, but rather there exist a multiplicity of such types of liminality, as well as of such concrete situations—related to the various placement of the tensions and contradictions between the major components of social order—division of labor, trust, power and search for broader meaning.

The distinction between liminal and liminoid situations, proposed lately by V. Turner, is but only one of such possible distinctions. Additional different combinations of liminality, communitas, antistructure, of different orientations to the center and to symbols of collective identity, as well as to movements of protest and possible change, can be found in most societies—not only in modern ones, but also in tribal and in various 'great' pre-modern civilizations, to which most of our seminar was devoted.

Thus it would not be correct to say that in so-called 'primitive' or tribal societies there tend to develop only highly structured liminal situations. As. U.



Almagor's paper in this volume shows—and as can be found also through a careful examination of many ethnographic materials—even in tribal societies there may exist different types of such liminal situations and while the more structured are naturally much more visible, they have not been the only ones.

Similarly such studies, as that by Shils and Young on the Coronation in Great Britain,<sup>25</sup> those of Edward Muir on civic ritual in Renaissance Venice,<sup>26</sup> the recent quite numerous studies of Soviet rituals,<sup>27</sup> do indicate that more fully structured liminal or semi-liminal situations can be found in modern societies.

But the relative spread and importance of such different societies does indeed differ between various societies, and it is the systemic analysis of such variations—perhaps with the central emphasis on their relations to different directions of change—that should constitute the major focus of comparative study of liminality.

X

The differences in the structuring of the symbolism of liminality and of liminal situations in different societies are greatly influenced by the different constellations, in different societies, of those components of construction of social order, the relations between which are at the very roots of development of tendencies to liminality, i.e. the relations or confrontation between division of labor, construction of trust and power, and the search for broader meaning.

It is not only differences in the division of labor, in the levels of social differentiation—i.e. differences between mechanical and organic solidarity, between 'non-literate', primitive or tribal societies on the one hand, and modern ones on the other—that shape different types of liminal situations in different societies.

Such differences are of course very important in shaping some of the aspects of such situations in any society. There can be no doubt that in the less differentiated societies, many of the situations of liminality are more structured, more fully ritualized and that within them different themes of liminality, of protest, antistructure are more fully articulated and in fact also highly regulated.

Max Gluckman's classical analysis of *Rituals of Rebellion*<sup>28</sup> does indeed portray exactly this type of situation in which protest, liminality, antistructure are very closely interrelated, fully structured and placed in the center of the society. His analysis does also show that the very structuring, articulation and regulation of such situation in the center seem to minimize also the disruptive potentialities of these activities, their potential for 'change' and 'real rebellion'.

At the same time, however, as Beidelman's critique of Gluckman has shown,<sup>29</sup> the very definition of the conflicts and ambivalences articulated in



Rituals of Rebellion are rooted not only in the conflicts inherent in social organization, but are inherent in the very nature of symbolic construction of social and cultural life which, in many ways, shape and provide an overall meaning to the symbols of collective identity and of the centers.

Thus indeed it is the structure and symbols of collective identity and of the center, their symbols and ideology, which often articulate the relations between trust, power and social division of labor, and their relation to broader meaning in terms of primordial and transcendental orientations that are of crucial importance in the structuring of different types of liminal situations and their symbolism.

Even within societies with relatively similar degree of social differentiation there do develop different types of centers and of symbolism of the center—and hence also of different types of liminal situations. Thus the case of the Desanett presented here by Uri Almagor points to some of the very important differences in contrast with the situation among the Zulu depicted by Max Gluckman—and indeed a much greater variety of centers and concomitant different types of liminal situations can be identified in various African societies and naturally even more beyond them.<sup>30</sup>

Moreover, even in such societies, there do exist, as Uri Almagor's analysis indicates, a multiplicity of such liminal situations and many of them constitute indeed very important nuclei of extension of trust and hence may also indeed seem as starting points for change. These changes mean not necessarily changes in the centers of society—they may take place in such dimensions as the structuring of the symbolic boundaries of collectivities or in the definition of various roles—thus indeed pointing to the importance of such situations for the analysis of different modes of change, of changes in different components of the social order.

## XI

The variability of centers in societies not dissimilar from the point of view of division of labor can be seen in those papers included here which deal with the 'premodern' Great Civilizations which constitute a sort of inbetween case, as it were, between the ideal type of mechanic and organic solidarity.

All these civilizations belong to the so-called Axial Age Civilizations,<sup>31</sup> i.e. those civilizations which crystallized out of the revolutions or transformations connected with what Karl Jaspers designated as the Axial Age when, in the first millenium before the Christian era—namely Ancient Israel, later on Christianity in its great variety, Ancient Greece, partially Iran with the development of Zoroastrianism, China early Imperial period, Hinduism and Buddhism, and, much later, beyond the Axial Age proper, Islam.<sup>32</sup> Common to all the civilizations was the development and institutionalization of a basic tension between the transcendental and the mundane orders.



The institutionalization of such conception was not just an intellectual exercise—it connoted a far-reaching change in man's active orientation to the world—a change with basic institutional implications and it was the combination of these new conceptions with their institutional implications that generated the symbolic intellectual and institutional possibilities of the development of sects and heterodoxies as potential agents of civilizational change.

On the symbolic or ideological level the development of these conceptions created a problem in the rational, abstract articulation of the givens of human and social existence and of the cosmic order. The root of the problem lies in the fact that the development of such conceptions necessarily poses the question of the ways in which the chasm between the transcendental and the mundane orders can be bridged. This gives rise—to use Weber's terminology—to the problem of salvation which is usually seen in terms of the reconstruction of human behavior and personality. This reconstruction would be based on the precepts of the higher moral or metaphysical order through which the chasm between the transcendental and mundane orders is bridged, and, as Gananath Obeyesekere has put it, rebirth eschatology becomes ethicized.<sup>33</sup> But the very attempt at such reconstruction was always torn by many internal tensions. It is these tensions—which we shall explicate in greater detail later on—and their institutional repercussions that ushered in a new type of social and civilizational dynamics in the history of mankind.

On the institutional level the development and institutionalization of such a conception of a basic tension, a chasm between the transcendental and the mundane order, gave rise, in all these civilizations, to attempts to reconstruct the mundane world according to the appropriate transcendental vision, to the principles of the higher metaphysical or ethical order.

The given, mundane, order was perceived in these civilizations as incomplete, inferior, often as bad as in need of being—at least in some of its parts—reconstructed according to the conception of bridging over the chasm between the transcendental and the mundane orders of salvation, i.e., according to the precepts of the higher ethical or metaphysical order, giving accordingly rise to far concrete institutional implications of these tensions. The most general and common of these has been the high degree of symbolic orientation and ideologization of the major aspects of the institutional structure, especially of the structure of collectivities, social centers, social hierarchies and processes of political struggle.

Thus first of all there developed in these civilizations the tendency to the construction of distinct civilizational frameworks and of the development of the conceptions of accountability of rulers.

Some collectivities and institutional spheres were singled out as the most appropriate carriers of the attributes of the required resolution. As a result new



types of collectivities were created or seemingly natural and 'primordial' groups were endowed with special meaning couched in terms of the perception of this tension and its resolution. The most important innovation in this context was the development of 'cultural' or 'religious' collectivities as distinct from ethnic or political ones. Some embryonic elements of this development existed in some of those societies in which no conception of tension between the transcendental and the mundane order was institutionalized. However, it was only with the development and institutionalization of this conception that those elements became transformed into new, potentially full-fledged collectivities with autonomous criteria of membership and loci of authority. The membership in these collectivities and frameworks tended to become imbued with a strong ideological dimension and to become a focus of ideological struggle—with a strong insistence on the exclusiveness and closure of such collectivities and on the distinction between inner and outer social and cultural space defined by them. This tendency became connected with attempts to structure the different cultural, political and ethnic collectivities in some hierarchical order, and the very construction of such an order usually became a focus of ideological and political conflict.

Closely related to this mode of structuring of special civilizational frameworks, there took place, in all these civilizations, a far-reaching restructuring of the relation between the political and the higher, transcendental order.

The political order as the central locus of the mundane order has usually been conceived as lower than the transcendental one and accordingly had to be restructured according to the precepts of the latter and above all according to the perception of the proper mode of overcoming the tension between the transcendental and the mundane order, of 'salvation'. It was the rulers who were usually held to be responsible for organizing the political order.

At the same time the nature of the rulers became greatly transformed. The King-God, the embodiment of the cosmic and earthly order alike, disappeared, and a secular ruler, in principle accountable to some higher order, appeared. There emerged the conception of the accountability of the rulers and of the community to a higher authority, God, Divine Law and the like. Accordingly, the possibility of calling a ruler to judgement emerged. The first most dramatic appearance of this conception appeared in Ancient Israel, in the priestly and prophetic pronouncements. A different conception of such accountability, an accountability to the community and its laws, appeared in the northern shores of the Eastern Mediterranean, in Ancient Greece. In different forms this conception appeared in all these civilizations.<sup>34</sup>

## XII

In connection with all these specific symbolic and institutional characteristics of the Axial Age Civilizations there have taken place, in these civilizations,



far-reaching changes in the map of liminal situations and symbols, of movements and symbolism of protest. Many new such types—as compared with tribal societies—have developed, while at the same time the structure of symbols of ‘older’ types of situations has greatly changed.

First of all, in these civilizations, the ‘central’, fully structured regulated rituals tend to become more and more limited to fully elaborated rituals of the center, with the periphery playing a much more passive role, mostly as spectators, or at most as rather passive recipients of the regnant vision. In these rituals the anti-structural and protest components and symbols are on the whole weakened and minimized, although there may indeed develop a very strong articulation of the ambivalences toward the arbitrariness of the cultural order—yet with a strong, ‘orthodox’ emphasis on the danger of diverting from it.

At the same time there tend to develop, within these societies and civilizations, relatively autonomous spheres and situations of what lately has been denoted as popular culture, with different degrees of connection to more central rituals. These range from diffuse local festivals, various leisure type activities, to more elaborate carnivals, in which many of the ambivalences and themes of protest are played out. These situations may become connected in different ways to more official regional rituals linking the center and periphery,<sup>35</sup> combining different mixtures of antinomianism and acceptance of the existing order.

Third there takes place in these civilizations the development of an entirely new type of liminality and protest—namely the symbolically and organizationally fully fledged heterodoxies, sects and sectarianism, a phenomenon closely related to the basic characteristics of the Axial Age Civilizations.<sup>36</sup>

Closely connected with the development of such heterodoxies and sectarianism is the development of carriers of the ‘pristine’ religious vision, the holy men of antiquity, such as the Indian or Buddhist renouncers, Christian monks and religious virtuosi—of the type discussed in this volume in Ilana F. Silber’s paper.<sup>37</sup>

### XIII

Beyond these various types of liminal situations and protest which can be found in all the Axial Age Civilizations and which are closely connected, not just with the degree of social differentiation, but to the combination of such differentiation above all with new modes of symbolic structuring of the world inherent in these civilizations, there do, however, exist far-reaching differences in the different Axial Age Civilizations in the exact structure and symbolism of these liminal situations, in their organizational and symbolic maps, in their connection to movements of protest, and in their impact on the macro-social



order in general and processes of change in these societies in particular.

These differences are related to the combination of the mode of social division of labor predominant within the basic cultural orientations—especially with the nature of the concepts of salvation predominant in them—whether they are this or other-worldly; to the structure of power in them and perhaps, above all, the structure and autonomy of the religious in relation to the political institutions.<sup>38</sup>

It is these aspects of the Axial Age Civilizations that shape the respective map of liminal symbols and situations and of movements of protest and heterodoxy within the potential impact on structuring of the boundaries of collectives and the symbols of the centers on processes of change in these societies—as the papers of Ilana F. Silber, Steve Kaplan, Michael Heyd, and the discussion on the Sabbatean movement—which was held in the seminar but which is not reported here—attest to.

Thus, to point out just very briefly, the papers presented here indicate in the other-worldly civilizations, such as Buddhism (and in a different mode also Hinduism) that the major impact of some at least of the types of liminal situations and protest movements is not on the reconstruction of the political centers of the respective societies; these centers are often seen as irrelevant to the major concept of salvation.

This does not mean that the Buddhist or Hindu sects did not have far-reaching impacts on the dynamics of their respective civilizations. First of all, they extended the scope of the different national and political communities and imbued them with new symbolic dimensions.<sup>39</sup> They could also second change some of the bases and criteria of participation in the civilizational communities—as was the case in Jainism, in the Bhakti movement and, of course, above all, in Buddhism when an entirely new civilizational framework was reconstructed.

Buddhism introduced also new elements into the political scene—above all that special way in which the Sangha, usually politically a very compliant group, could in some cases, as Paul Mus<sup>40</sup> has shown, become a sort of moral conscience of the community, calling the rulers to some accountability.

But this impact was of a different nature from that of the struggles between the reigning orthodoxies and the numerous heterodoxies that developed within the monotheistic civilizations.

Thus indeed, in those civilizations in which a very strong combination of this and other-worldly orientations is predominant, above all in the monotheistic civilizations in which the political centers are indeed seen as an arena of salvation, the impact of such movements on the structuring of centers is much more powerful.

Of crucial importance has been the fact that in these latter cases a central aspect of such struggles was the attempt to reconstruct the very political and



cultural centers of their respective societies and that, because of this, these struggles became a central part of the histories of these civilizations, shaping the major contours of their development.<sup>41</sup>

From all those points of view Confucian China constitutes a rather mixed case, paradoxically somewhat nearer to the monotheistic than to the Asian civilizations.

But even in these civilizations such impact may be limited, as Steve Kaplan's paper on Ethiopia indicated, by the strength of the center, by its distance from the centers of Christianity, by the position of the Church *vis-à-vis* the Church and by the degree of monopolization of the symbols of the sacred by the rulers. Here it would be indeed very interesting to compare these developments with Eastern Christianity in general and the Byzantine and Russian Empires in particular.

The full impact of the different symbols and movements of liminality and protest on the symbols of the center, as derived from the combination of this and other-worldly orientations, can be found in conjunction with special geopolitical situations, in Western Europe, in the transition to modernity, in the Great Revolutions,<sup>42</sup> as discussed in the paper of M. Heyd and was also to some degree in the Jewish case in the Sabbatean movement.<sup>43</sup>

At the same time, however, this strong impact of these movements on the center should not obliterate the importance of the other types of liminal situations, of popular culture that tend to develop in such societies and which become even more pronounced—and transformed—with the development of modernity.

#### XIV

Indeed with the development of modernity, the whole map of liminality and protest has developed in new directions which are connected both with the growing social differentiation, development of market economy, industrialization and capitalism, as well as with far-reaching transformations in the symbolic field.

In this latter field two central, closely interconnected trends, are here of crucial importance. One is the growing incorporation of symbols and modes of protest into the centers of the post-revolutionary societies and into their symbols; the consequent legitimation of such symbols, making paradoxically more difficult the direct confrontation between the center and the movements of protest and weakening the impact of the latter on the former.<sup>44</sup>

Second is the development of *Entzauberung*, of disenchantment, thus seemingly, as Erik Cohen's paper shows, weakening the contact, the connection between the centers of society, as well as other spheres of life, including those of daily life, with any transcendental vision.



Third was the development of mass-culture in general and of mass-media in particular. This last development has, as is well known, given rise to a far-reaching controversy in the social sciences—closely related also to the controversy about the end of ideology—and of direct bearing on our concern here. One view, expounded already by the 'critical' sociology of the thirties, best articulated in the work of Adorno and his followers, and extending—in the contemporary sciences—to the work of Habermas and many others—saw in contemporary mass-culture an escapist (and often vulgar) flight from the real 'ideological' struggle, from attempts at active, potentially revolutionary participation in a society dominated by various economic and political groups; as well as—as most succinctly articulated by T. S. Eliot—a travesty of and flight from a genuine traditional culture of the lower class.<sup>45</sup>

Another view, most fully expounded by Edward Shils, saw in such mass-culture—despite many of its vulgar aspects—a result of continuously opening up of centers of the modern society to participation of broader strata, and at the same time giving rise, by such growing participation and incorporation, to a weakening of ideological orientations and growth of orientation to civility.<sup>46</sup>

These controversies are of course of crucial importance for our discussion and while it would be impossible to do justice here to the complexity of the topic, it might yet be worthwhile to present some preliminary indications.

There can, of course, be no doubt that the combination of these three trends—of the incorporation of themes of protest into the central symbols of society; the process of disenchantment and the development of mass culture and mass-media—have indeed given rise to very far-reaching changes, in modern societies, in the structure of liminality, in the maps of symbols and situations of liminality and protest in the relations between liminality, *communitas*, *antistructure* and processes of social change.

It is however doubtful whether all these developments have indeed ruptured the orientations to the transcendental, not only beyond the centers which have indeed to no small degree lost their place as loci of charismatic vision—but also in other spheres of mundane life, transposing such orientations only to 'centers out there', and whether it is liminoid situations which are the most prevalent in modern, democratic societies.

Indeed, as is very well known, many movements of protest with very strong elements of anti-structure or *communitas* and strong transcendental visions, have indeed developed in late modern societies—and with orientations to the centers. Perhaps the best known of these has been the student movements of the sixties. Truly enough, this movement—or rather these movements—were often seen as failures when compared to the great classical revolutions as they have not succeeded, despite their declared goals, to have strong direct impact on the centers of their societies; to reconstruct these centers in the mode of the Great Revolutions. And yet these movements—as well as such movements as



the ethnic and the women's one—had great and varied impact on many central dimensions of the social order, such as the meaning of institution—as for instance the weakening of the centrality—derived to no small degree from the Protestant ethic—of the economic and work situations to new definitions of roles—such as gender roles, economic roles and of the role of citizens.

Such changes have been often connected with the creation of new types of liminal situations—one of the most interesting of which have been various structural enclaves within which new cultural orientations, new modes of search for meaning, often couched in transcendental terms, tend to be developed and upheld—partially as counter-cultures, partially as components of new culture.

These enclaves in which some people may participate fully, others in a more transitory fashion, may serve in some situations as reservoirs of extreme revolutionary activities and groups, as loci or starting points of various new social movements, or they may become connected in different ways with the more 'routine' post-industrial coalitions.<sup>47</sup> At the same time, the development of mass-media have created—as Elihu Katz's paper indicates—new possibilities of contact in the framework of daily life with public, charismatic events.

These are necessarily only very preliminary remarks and orientations about the different directions of recrystallization of symbols and situations of liminality in modern societies—but even they indicate the importance of continuous, systematic research and analysis in this field.

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# THE CROSS AND THE CUDGEL:

## THE ORDEALS OF A JAPANESE CHURCH<sup>1</sup>

Winston Davis

In the autumn of 1969 a violent struggle broke out in the United Church of Christ in Japan (*Nihon Kirisutokyōdan*; hereafter: Kyodan). Radical seminar-ians and university students put on riot helmets, covered their faces with towels,<sup>2</sup> and, brandishing long cudgels,<sup>3</sup> invaded various meetings of the church. Once inside, they seized microphones, intimidated the participants, and completely dominated the proceedings. For hours they harangued delegates with their 'problems',<sup>4</sup> hurling abusive language and cat-calls at the church's most venerable theologians and laypersons. The few delegates who dared to speak out were booed, pushed back into their seats, or roughed up. In some cases, meetings went on like this throughout the night. After one such encounter in the Tokyo district, the chairman of the meeting was taken to the hospital and treated for exhaustion.

At about the same time, leaders of church-related universities were going through similar ordeals. Radical students pelted the chancellor of Meiji Gakuin with eggs, poured milk over his head, and broke one of his limbs. At Aoyama Gakuin, they beat up the chaplain in the university chapel itself. Radicals in the seminaries disrupted ministerial examinations and tore up exam papers. Seminary buildings were taken over and barricaded by student protesters. For about three years ordinations throughout the country were forcibly postponed. To restore law, order and property rights, theological faculties felt compelled to call in the riot control police. Several seminarians and radical students were arrested; some were later indicted and given jail sentences. In Tokyo, two radicals committed suicide.

In major metropolitan areas the turmoil spread to the local congregations. Deeply divided over the issues, churches split and attendance and offerings seriously declined. In Nishinomiya, a minister who dared to compare the painful experiences of his radical son to the suffering of Christ on the cross was dismissed for preaching 'unchristian sermons.' In Kyoto, students interrupted a pastor's sermon with various 'problems', and then, advancing to the pulpit, tore off his robe and demanded his resignation. After the



incident, the minister was hospitalized with a heart condition. Throughout the church, word quickly spread of worship services that had been similarly disrupted, of collection and Communion plates that had been dashed to the floor and desecrated. In some churches, radical pastors suspended Communion services, banned the use of the Lord's Prayer and the pastoral benediction. Throughout the '70s, charges and counter-charges of heresy and violence filled the pages of church publications and even made their way into the secular press. For years district assemblies and national boards were unable to meet for fear of unpleasant encounters.

Statistics tell an equally dismal story. Of all the church's vital statistics, only membership, contributions and pastors' salaries showed an improvement during the period from 1948 to the beginning of the struggle. During this period, attendance at Sunday morning worship services remained steady, but all other indicators were in decline: church school enrollments and attendance, baptisms, and the percent of the membership regarded as 'active resident communicants.' These figures suggest that even before the Kyodan struggle broke out, the church was far from a healthy, dynamic institution. During the years of the controversy contributions and salaries continued to improve. But tell-tale U-curves were noted in the figures for (1) church school enrollments and attendance, (2) baptism, (3) attendance at Sunday worship services, (4) average membership, and (5) active resident communicants.<sup>5</sup> Statistics indicating a rise in contributions to the church during this period are probably an indication of both inflation and a rapidly rising GNP. More significant is the fact that by 1980 the Kyodan had accumulated debts amounting to some \$700,000. Both personnel and programs sponsored by the national headquarters in Tokyo had to be cut back severely.

Before we can make sense of this struggle we need to know more about its historical development and the worldview of its participants.

### *THE HISTORY OF THE DISPUTE*

The Kyodan was formed by a merger of thirty-four Protestant denominations in June 1941. While the Japanese churches had discussed an ecumenical merger for many years, it took pressure from the fascist, wartime regime to bring the new church into existence. For this reason, while conservatives to this day continue to regard the union as an 'act of divine Providence,' radicals insist that the church is also a creature of the state. Soon after the end of the war, the Anglican Episcopal Church of Japan, the Japan Lutheran Church and various Baptist groups withdrew from the union. Nevertheless, the Kyodan continued to be by far the largest Protestant church in the country.

The roots of the controversy go back to disputes between the Social Gospel



faction (*shakai-ha*) and the more evangelistic elements (*fukuin-ha* or *kyōkai-ha*) active in the various denominations that joined the Kyodan. A more recent factor was the publication of two highly controversial documents by the church. In 1954 a new Confession of Faith was adopted by the Kyodan. Many liberals feared that this creed, while it contained nothing novel, would be used to restrict theological freedom, especially should it be used as the basis of ordination examinations. Conservatives, on the other hand, worried that without a creed-based examination system, the doors of the ministry would be flung open to the unorthodox. The second document was a declaration dealing with the church's role during World War II. Although the Kyodan had made a brief statement in 1946 admitting its part in the war, by the middle '60s some felt that this was not enough. Therefore, on Easter Sunday, 1967, a 'Confession of War Responsibility' was issued in the name of Suzuki Masahisa, moderator of the church. The Confession stirred up a heated debate. While not many were willing to admit they were opposed to its contents, a large number of conservatives felt that the document had been foisted upon them in an autocratic way. Even liberals felt that the church should have had more time to discuss and digest the new Confession. These documents had the effect of polarizing the leadership of the Kyodan into a liberal wing that felt the Gospel should be expressed in political and social action, and a conservative branch that believed the church's true mission was evangelism and the salvation of individual souls.

The fuel already spread over the church by the disputes of the '50s and '60s was suddenly ignited by the question whether or not to participate in the building of the Christian Pavilion at the International Exposition to be held in Osaka in 1970 (commonly called 'Expo 70'). In 1968, the National Christian Council endorsed the idea of the pavilion. Costs were to be shared about in equal thirds by Japanese Catholics and Protestants, and by overseas Christians. In October, 1968, the 15th General Assembly of the Kyodan voted to participate in the construction of the pavilion. This decision immediately raised howls of protest, especially from leftists and liberals in the Osaka and Tokyo districts who suspected that the government was using the exposition to distract public attention from the most controversial issue of the postwar period: the renewal of the US-Japan Security Treaty (Japanese abbreviation: Ampo). They reasoned that the government had concocted this 'festival of Baal' in order to avoid the mass demonstrations that had taken place when the treaty was renewed ten years earlier. Conservatives, however, supported the idea of the pavilion, saying that it would offer an excellent chance to 'witness for Christ.' On 14 July 1969, just as the debate was reaching its boiling point, Moderator Suzuki, a strong and dynamic figure, died from cancer. He was succeeded by Vice-Moderator Ii Kiyoshi whom both sides finally came to regard as a weak and vacillating leader. The



stage was now set for the chaotic performances of the next decade and a half.

On 1 September 1969, over 150 helmeted student radicals took over a meeting of the church's Executive Committee. The students disrupted the agenda, violently insulting the more conservative members and interrogating them concerning their stand on the pavilion. Some students took up positions by the doors where they prevented members from leaving, or going to the restrooms. About thirty or forty radicals surrounded and badgered Professor Kitamori Kazoh, a faculty member of the Tokyo Union Theological Seminary (TUTS) and one of Japan's foremost theologians.<sup>6</sup> Some, armed with slingshots, hurled hard paper pellets at him and broke his glasses. At one point, when Kitamori suddenly tore up a confession he had just been forced to sign, a student struck the professor in the face. Finally, after continuing on like this throughout the night, the radicals extracted a promise from the committee that it would call a special assembly of the church to discuss the problem of the pavilion. The meeting was finally adjourned at 7.30 a.m. on 2 September. On 11 September, radicals forced the Executive Committee to hold another open meeting which, again, turned into an all-night affair. A special assembly of the church was finally convened, but it too was paralyzed by the violent tactics of the radicals so that no vote could be taken on the question of the pavilion. It is said that the meeting concluded with the singing of 'The Internationale' rather than with the usual hymn.

Hamstrung in this way, the church was legally bound to abide by its previous decision and the Christian Pavilion was finally built, paid for in part by funds from the Kyodan. Throughout the country, district assemblies were forced to allow radical participant-observers without voting rights (*baisekisha*) to attend meetings. Repeatedly, the *baisekisha* disrupted the proceedings with their 'revolutionary' tactics. Violence, and rumours of violence, prevented the major urban districts (Tokyo, Kanagawa, Osaka, Hyogo, and Kyoto) from selecting delegates for national church assemblies. Finally, the question whether or not to admit *baisekisha* to meetings became as heated an issue as the pavilion itself.

As a result of the 'Kitamori Affair', a serious rift developed between the TUTS faculty, on the one hand, and the Tokyo clergy and the Executive Committee, on the other. The seminary claimed that participants in the 1-2 September meeting should have protected Professor Kitamori from harm. The Executive Committee and the Tokyo clergy countered by attacking the seminary's transcendental, above-it-all attitude. In October 1969, students at TUTS, protesting the stand their teachers had taken, went on strike and demanded 'mass negotiations' (*taishū dankō*) with the faculty. In November, they occupied and barricaded the seminary buildings. Later, student radicals broke into a professor's home and were indicted for illegal trespass. Finally, on 11 March 1970, the TUTS faculty called in a 150-man police squad to



drive the students out. When the police arrived on the scene at 7 a.m. only a handful of students were on the premises so that only four were arrested. Three students were later indicted. On the 17th of that month, when registration was held, about 20 percent of the student body decided to leave the seminary. Three years later, the general assembly of the Kyodan passed a resolution demanding that TUTS drop its legal charges against the students. The seminary, however, refused and the students were sentenced to suspended prison terms. Today, relations between the seminary and the church are still at an impasse. Considerations of space and the reader's patience do not allow me to go into any further details, or into the similar goings-on at other Kyodan-affiliated seminaries such as Aoyama Gakuin, Kwansei Gakuin, Tohoku Gakuin, and Doshisha University.

On 25 May 1971, the leaders of the Tokyo district tried to hold a district assembly at the Yamate church. Upon their arrival, the radicals, who had been promised a hearing at this meeting, found that a barricade had been thrown up around the church. A small entrance had been constructed in the fence so that the credentials of each participant could be checked and all *baisekisha* kept out. The students, feeling they had been deceived, attacked the barricade. In the scuffle, some of the guards commissioned by the church to protect the building were injured and received medical treatment. Although their wounds were not serious, district leaders made a report of the incident to the police. As a result of the police investigation, three of the protestors were arrested and indicted. One of them later committed suicide. In 1974, the remaining two were found guilty and were sentenced to terms of eight and twelve months in prison. These events completely disrupted the district. In 1975, all business had to be turned over to Tokyo's three sub-districts, an open confession that the district itself was completely deadlocked.

In December of the following year, a radical pastor in the Kansai area disrupted a meeting of the Council of Cooperation (COC), an important board set up to co-ordinate relations between the church, Christian schools, social work, and various foreign mission boards. The Executive Council's apparent weakness in the face of the clergyman's revolutionary posturing enraged the members of the committee. Not only did the Council not expel the minister; on the contrary, it seemed to reward his misbehaviour by making him a special Kyodan representative to the COC. As a result, in 1978, the Schools Council, the group specifically responsible for co-ordinating work in the Protestant colleges, universities and secondary schools, moved its office out of the COC headquarters to Aoyama Gakuin University. Work and co-operation among these vital committees was seriously impaired.

Throughout the struggle, the radicals sustained and co-ordinated their operations through various struggle-committees on their home campuses.



There were various, small New Left groups organized on an *ad hoc*, single-issue basis. These groups often had no elected leaders, and apparently, little or no formal, or hierarchical structure. They deliberately sought to avoid the top-heavy regimentation of youth groups sponsored by the Socialists and the Japanese Communist Party. Among these rather short-lived groups was an anti-Expo organization called *Hanbanpaku Kyōtōkaigi* which had grown out of *Beheiren* (Citizens' Alliance for Peace in Vietnam). There was also a Caucus of Independent Christians (*Jikiren*) formed by student radicals and a Caucus of Independent Pastors (*Jibokuren*) for radical Kyodan ministers.

Although a number of conservative caucuses had existed in the Kyodan even before this, in 1977 a new group called the Federation of Evangelical Churches (Japanese abbreviation: *Rengō*) was formed by conservatives in order to prevent (what they perceived as) the complete take-over of the church by radicals. Their express purpose was 'to keep the Church, as the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, "clean" in terms of ecclesiastical belief. Instead of having our time and energy consumed by endless, meaningless debate and so-called "dialogue", we wish to invest all our energy and might in preparing for and "doing" evangelism and mission ("the mission of God").' Thus they condemned the 17th, 18th and 19th general assemblies of the church, meetings of the Executive Committee, and other boards and commissions which had 'compromised with heresy' by denying 'the canonicity of the Bible, the Confession of Christ as Lord and Savior, and the Faith of Redemption.' Conservatives were also upset about a decision by the Kyodan in 1975 that 'no positions will be excluded' in answers to ministerial examinations concerning the meaning of the Creed. Did this mean that an ordained Kyodan minister could teach that Jesus was not the Christ? While the decision to exclude no positions had enabled the church to resume ordinations, conservatives feared that it had opened the ministry to pagans and heretics. By 1978, Rengo had grown to 61 congregations and had 292 individual members.<sup>7</sup> By 1980, it had a budget of \$148,000.

In 1979, in defiance of Kyodan rules, Rengo held its own ministerial examinations and proceeded to ordain five candidates. Although Rengo's purpose was simply to assure a steady supply of orthodox clergy, the Kyodan has refused to recognize the validity of these examinations and ordinations. Although the conservative group was originally intended as a 'purifying' force within the Kyodan, and not as a new sect or denomination, a few Rengo congregations recently voted to withdraw from the church.

Today the controversy has subsided considerably. All districts save Tokyo (made up of some 350 congregations) have been able to reconvene their annual assemblies. Nevertheless, unpleasant incidents continue to occur. As recently as 1982, a 73-year-old conservative leader in Osaka was knocked to the floor by chairs and teacups hurled by radicals. Now and then one pastor,



known as 'the hit man of the radicals,' disrupts meetings, usually by knocking books and papers out of the hands of delegates with whom he happens to disagree, or by pulling chairs out from under them.

## TWO WORLD VIEWS

Although I will later try to explain the Kyodan struggle in sociological terms, the debate that went on cannot be reduced to social (let alone 'material') factors. Unpleasant as it was, the controversy had its own epistemic or theological integrity and, in fact, touched on fundamental questions about the role of the church in modern society asked throughout the Christian world.

The 'theology' of the controversy appeared in a flood of position papers, speeches, sermons and published articles. In the heat of the battle, words, events, and things all became symbols. These symbols, in turn, became signs of still other symbols, producing in the end a theological grotesquerie difficult for outsiders to comprehend. Both sides dilated endlessly on a host of 'problems'—e.g., the Christian Pavilion, the Declaration of War Responsibility, ministerial examinations, reunion with the Okinawan church, relations with the Korean churches, the Yasukuni Shrine Bill, the Security Treaty, rearmament, and Japan's economic 're-invasion' of Asia—with all the subtlety, passion and venom of medieval Schoolmen. To this cacophany, theological adepts added descant voices two octaves higher relating these 'problems' to the loftier symbols of the faith itself—e.g., faith, good works, redemption, resurrection, evangelism, and the creed of the church—and to the still more arcane concerns of twentieth century theology: eschatology, salvation-history, praxis and so on. In the end, the 'dialogue' between the two sides sounded like a double chorus simultaneously reciting a litany of frenzied, mutual curses.

While the theological pedigree of the radicals ultimately can be traced back to Anglo-American Neo-Calvanism and the Social Gospel, its roots also go deep into the subsoil of Japanese Protestantism. In the postwar period, the teachings of various Western theologians were introduced in Japan which called for a 'servant church' ready to dismantle or dissolve itself in social action to save the world. Japanese thinkers also played a role. Takizawa Katsumi, student of the famous philosopher Nishida Kitarō, developed a philosophical position said to be congruent with the teachings of Marx, Buddha and Jesus, but from which one can criticize all of the ideologies and institutions which later were developed in their names.<sup>8</sup> The works of Tagawa Kenzō played an important role in the radicals' understanding of the Bible and of the historical Jesus in particular.<sup>9</sup> At TOTS and other seminaries a dispute called the 'Jesus or Paul?' controversy broke out in tandem with the other quarrels of the day. Under Tagawa's influence, some



radicals came to regard St Paul as a reactionary—apparently because he instructed Christian slaves to be content with their lot, and because he seemed to enjoin Christians to obey the state blindly. This led some to question the validity of the Pauline–Lutheran doctrine of ‘justification by faith alone,’ the very heart of Protestant theology. Paul’s theological formalism was contrasted with the ‘humanism’ of Jesus. A few students may even have questioned whether Jesus was the Christ.<sup>10</sup>

The conservatives in the Church include a wide spectrum of believers, from pastors with a Holiness or fundamentalist background to erudite theologians who, perhaps for the first time in their lives, found themselves labeled conservative simply because they opposed the violent tactics of the radicals. While their diversity makes a summary of their positions difficult, a survey of their writings reveals the influence of the evangelistic pietism of their American missionary teachers, an almost Augustinian sense of political realism and church order, a virtually Confucian respect for their *sempai* (elders or predecessors, including the wartime leadership of the Kyodan), and a serious commitment to a free, pluralistic society (a belief growing out of Japan’s postwar liberal democracy and, to some degree, out of their own Protestant heritage). In their eyes, the thought of the radicals stems not from theology, but from the Marxism, Maoism, and paganism brought into the church by recent converts. Some believe the problems of the Kyodan originated in the failure of the Japanese churches to preach ‘redemption through the Cross.’ At times, a sectarian stridency can be heard in their voices. ‘We are small, but *we* are the real church,’ says one Rengo leader. ‘*We* have preserved the creed, the theology, church order, and a high level of morality. After the so-called church destroys itself, it will realize *we* were right!’

While radicals see no difference between the military imperialism of Japan before 1945 and the global economic expansionism of the postwar period (the ‘Ampo Establishment’), conservatives stoutly defend the discontinuities of their country’s recent past. As one conservative theologian puts it, ‘if the pavilion was imperialism, then *everything* in Japan is imperialism!’—a conclusion he was not about to entertain. Because the radicals have taken a flexible position on the interpretation of the creed (‘no positions excluded’), but have insisted that only one position concerning the Christian Pavilion is morally acceptable, conservatives have accused them of relativizing the faith while absolutizing their own political position. By treating the Confession of War Responsibility as a document on the same theological level as the creed, radicals have confused good works and faith. Since the world is their ultimate concern, their position finally results in apostasy. By absolutizing their own radical or secular humanism, they have made the Saviour redundant. For them, Jesus no longer seemed to be Christ and Lord.<sup>11</sup>



What symbolized the heart of the controversy for the conservatives were the radicals' *gebabō*, staves which in conservative eyes were the truncheons of the Goths, the clubs of the Red Guard, and the cudgels of the Circumcillians rolled into one. For conservatives, the radicals' violence was the cause of the whole rumpus. Among the radicals, age-old Puritan and sectarian sensibilities awoke once again. Church buildings, sacraments, ministerial garb and titles (e.g. *sensei*, or 'Reverend'), not to mention the politeness that permeates the Japanese language, were all rejected as the whited sepulchres of hypocrisy, if not the very insignia of the Ampo Establishment itself. Since the church had joined forces with the state by participating in Expo, the students felt that by struggling with conservatives in the church's 'solemn assemblies,' they were confronting the state itself. For this reason they refused to take off their helmets in church meetings. As they put it, helmets were a 'sign of the struggle.'

Throughout the controversy, attention on both sides was focused on the Christian Pavilion. Conservatives regarded it both as a real opportunity for evangelistic outreach and as an example of voluntary action in a democratic church. Radicals, however, saw in it the menace of a 'new Japanese fascism',<sup>12</sup> a 're-enactment of wartime apostasy',<sup>13</sup> and a 'festival of Baal (or capitalism)' celebrating the triumphs of materialism, rearmament, and the exploitation of workers, peasants and colonial peoples everywhere.<sup>14</sup> For them, the Christian Pavilion was no different from the Yasukuni Shrine. Both were sticky filaments of an ideological web being spun by the insidious spiders of militarism and monopoly capitalism.<sup>15</sup>

Another pivotal symbol was the Confession of War Responsibility.<sup>16</sup> Although inspired by the Stuttgart Confession of the German church, the Japanese confession was really quite different. In Japan, there had been no *bekennende Kirche*. The Confession was drawn up by pastors who had come to maturity during the war (the so-called *senchū-ha*). These men, being younger, were better able to adjust to the democratic ideals of the postwar period than were their *sempai*, the wartime leaders. Many in the older generation felt that, far from confessing their guilt, they were being criticized by the Confession and by a younger generation which knew nothing of the hardships they had endured. From their point of view, the compromises the church had made between 1931 and 1945 were made under conditions of extreme pressure and actually had had the effect of saving the Kyodan from more serious persecutions. As a response to conservative protests, a Five Man Committee was set up by the church to clarify the meaning of the Confession. The committee's report took some of the sting out of the Confession by declaring that, in spite of mistakes during the war, the Kyodan had remained true to the faith. For the radicals, the committee's slick distinction between faith and works seemed to absolve the church too quickly



of her sins of apostasy (i.e. emperor worship) and collaboration. Much more could, and should be said. The person who has had most to say on this subject is Doshisha's radical church historian, Professor Dohi Akio. What follows is a paraphrase of the radicals' perception of the church's 'war guilt' based largely on Dohi's research:

After Uchimura Kanzo's so-called *lese-majeste* affair, the Japanese churches tried to defend themselves more vigorously by proving their patriotism and 'Japaneseness' whenever they could. Although the Protestant churches had opposed government efforts to control religious groups in the 1920s, resistance became soft during the increasingly tense decade of the 30s. In 1933, officials from the Ministry of Education addressed the delegates of the Japanese Christian Federation, calling on them to recognize the *Basic Principles of the National Essence* (*Kokutai no hongi*) and urging them to 'Japanize' Christianity itself. The Federation officially replied to this challenge by proclaiming:

We are fully aware of the trend of the national movement. We grasp the true meaning of the Japanese spirit and will protect all that is good and beautiful therein. . . . We believe that Christian thought and faith are the best that we can offer for the clarification of the foundation of the national movement and the precious glory of our Imperial Family.

In 1939, the Religious Corporation Law was finally passed by the Diet. Under this legislation, the Ministry of Education was given control of the establishment (and disestablishment) of all religious groups, as well as the certification, appointment, and general oversight of religious leaders. Christians finally acquiesced in this law, hoping that by securing state recognition they would finally escape adverse public opinion. Under these conditions, the Kyodan was established in 1941 by a majority vote of denominational delegates. This made the Kyodan the illicit offspring of Protestant churches, which had willingly offered themselves to the militarist regime.

Even before this, Japanese Christians had actively been participating in their country's military adventures with gusto and naiveté. Some church publications urged believers to participate in the rites of State Shinto as a matter of etiquette and 'plain common sense.' Still, the worship of the Shinto gods and the emperor was a vexing question. While articles urging resistance did appear, the churches fell completely silent on the issue as Japan got more deeply involved in the war. A song called 'The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere' was added to hymnals. Church leaders declared that worshipers should bow in the direction of the imperial palace before services began. Pastors were encouraged to make pilgrimages to Ise and other Shinto shrines. Church officials visiting the Japanese colony of Korea encouraged native Christians to participate in Shinto rituals—a suggestion the Koreans fiercely rejected. In Manchuria, churches were built with the support of Mantetsu, the national railroad, in the hope that they would create a 'better atmosphere' in the colony. Japanese Christians regarded such contributions as acts of Providence designed to promote patriotism, industry and evangelism alike. The church responded to the Manchurian Incident with renewed calls for national unity, prayers for peace,



and plans for conducting 'special, emergency evangelism' in Northern China and in Japan itself. With slogans like *dendō hōkoku* (serving the country through evangelism), the church expressed its naive faith that, somehow, the ritual of Protestant evangelism would make a significant contribution to the war effort. Money was collected by the church to purchase aircraft for the armed forces. As in the Christian West, prayers were offered up for the victory and safety of the men serving their country. The few Holiness and Nazarene ministers who dared to oppose the emperor system were instructed by the Kyodan to repent and voluntarily resign from their churches. The Kyodan also tried to dissolve their churches and expropriate their property. One Nazarene minister who had refused to worship the emperor was stripped of his ordination by the church.

After the war was over, General Douglas MacArthur dreamed about Christianizing Japan. Occupation authorities therefore turned a blind eye to the wartime activities of the church and discreetly avoided purging its leaders. In return, the church gratefully applied itself to its evangelistic campaigns with renewed vigor. Like Japan's so-called New Religions (which generally had also supported the war effort with enthusiasm), the Kyodan offered itself in the post-war years as the key to world peace. Throughout the 1960s, the church took a relatively progressive stand on a number of social problems, issuing declarations against the Yasukuni Shrine Bill, the re-establishment of Empire Day, the American involvement in Vietnam, and the use of Japanese ports by U.S. nuclear submarines. But on the crucial issue of the renewal of the Security Treaty with the United States in 1960, the church avoided a clear-cut stand. Although one thousand Christians demonstrated in January of that year against the treaty, the Kyodan itself refused to be a sponsor of the demonstration on the grounds that its Social Committee had not followed 'proper procedures.' The only statement issued by the church on the problem was an obscure document from its Missionary Research Center. For radicals in the church, this raised the fear that once again the church was slipping into a cozy alliance with state power.

Such were the events which, from the radical perspective, had prompted the church, in its Confession of War Responsibility, to 'seek the mercy of our Lord and the forgiveness of our fellow men'.<sup>17</sup> What is important for us is the symbolic use of this material in the controversy that erupted in 1969. It seems highly unlikely to me that repressed feelings of 'war guilt' were, in any sense, a 'cause' of the Kyodan's controversy. Although naturally I cannot prove it, I strongly suspect that the 'war guilt' Japanese Christians felt was not the festering of a superego troubled by the sins of the past, but the brooding of an ego over the possibility of losing face in the present or future. If I am right in my assessment of the psychology behind the Confession, the *social function* of the radicals' muckraking was not simply to bring the church to its knees in repentance, but to embarrass the older generation and the conservative opposition in particular. In other words, the purpose of this painful excavation of the past (which took place primarily *after* the Expo fracas broke out) was to prepare a moral indictment against the ecclesiastical establishment. Dohi and other radicals have used history to demonstrate the illegitimate birth of the Kyodan, its infantile nastiness during the war, its adolescent dependence on



missionaries and foreign funds in the postwar period, and its adult corruption as seen in its collaboration with the Ampo Establishment at Expo 70. History, therefore, was made to bear witness to the total depravity of the church and its conservative leadership.

### BEHIND IT ALL

Since Japan is widely advertised in the West as a harmonious, consensual society, many will wonder how such a violent feud could ever have taken place, especially in a Christian church. Those more familiar with Japan and Christianity will realize, of course, that conflict is a stranger to neither one. But even they may want to ask *why* this squabble ever took place. This question has been asked by two very different groups. It is asked, first of all, by the interested parties themselves, usually out of anger, or out of a need to point the finger of blame at the other side. Such is not my purpose. The question is also asked by social scientists and historians in their search for the cause of events. Since legitimate doubt has been raised concerning the explanatory power of 'cause' in historiography—doubts which should also arise in the sociology of religion—we must approach this problem with due caution and self-restraint. The Kyodan controversy is *extremely* complex. Its events, differently perceived by each faction, if not by each individual, are widely distributed in time and space. Behind each encounter and episode lie concealed subtle and longstanding networks of personal friendships, loyalties and animosities which do not lend themselves well to research or scholarly publication. In the rest of this paper, I shall therefore avoid any discussion of the 'real causes' of the dispute and restrict myself to an analysis of its *enablements*, i.e. various factors which, brought into play in the same 'time frame', *facilitated* the eruption and continuation of the struggle.<sup>18</sup> After disposing of (what I regard as) the minor enablements, I shall devote the remainder of my study to what I regard as the major ones: the *historical* impact of the university struggles of the late '60s and '70s and the *structural* influence of various incompatible political systems at work in the organization of the Kyodan.

First, let us look at some explanatory theories which do *not* seem to work. Many church members explain the church struggle in terms of an age or generation gap. This is not very convincing. After all, not every new generation tries to overthrow its church and university. While most radicals were students aged 18 to 22, older radicals and sympathizers could also be found. Furthermore, the radicals were not even a majority of their own generation. The vital factor was not age itself, but the specific historical experiences which this particular age cohort had had, a subject to which I shall soon return. Social class, too, was not a significant factor. The Kyodan



is, in general, a middle class church. No one on either side seemed to regard the struggle as one between haves and have-nots. Likewise, while each side claims a profounder theology, neither can objectively demonstrate that it has a monopoly on education or erudition. Each side has its professorial supporters, each its intellectuals. And, it must be said, each has its aggressive and tactless hot-heads. While more churches with a fundamentalist or Holiness background may be affiliated with Rengo, the split in the church did not run along the lines of the denominations that originally joined the Kyodan merger. Nearly all of the 'mainline' denominations had had their liberals and conservatives, their social action factions and evangelical caucuses before the merger. By the time the Kyodan struggle began, a whole generation had been raised without any significant exposure to the old denominational identities. Some conservatives contend that most of the radicals are recent converts and that the non-radicals tend to come from Christian homes. But this charge seems to be a slur rather than objective insight. Simply being a first generation Christian does not seem to dispose individuals to ecclesiastical radicalism.

While class is not a major factor, economic considerations have not been without their influence. Although evangelists working for a pittance in rural areas were deeply upset about the money spent on the pavilion, their churches, being smaller and more dependent, tended to stay out of the quarrel. The smaller churches simply could not afford to take sides. Thus, in many cases, economic considerations tended to prevent polarization. Many pastors were said to be afraid to affiliate with Rengo because they feared the radicals would gain control of the church and cut off their pensions. Young ordinands may have espoused a more conservative line in order to avoid charges of 'Jesus-ism,' something that could cost them their future livings. Economic prudence also encouraged young academic assistants in seminaries to keep a low profile during the controversy. On the other hand, the economic factor sometimes kept the pot of confrontation boiling. Because churches did not want to lose the financial support of liberals and radicals, no moves were made to excommunicate them. At TUTS, contributions from conservative or neutral congregations now more than make up for the funds the church withdrew from the seminary budget. This newly achieved economic independence has enabled TUTS to resist reconciliation proposals from the denomination that call on the seminary to criticize itself for having called in the riot police. This too has prolonged the affair.

### *THE UNIVERSITY STRUGGLE*

Early in 1968 violent student riots broke out at Nihon and Tokyo Universities and spread quickly throughout the country. Whether private or national, religious or secular, Christian or Buddhist, Japanese universities



were soon paralyzed by kangaroo-courts, mass confrontations between students and administrators, and outright criminal activity—including arson, murder, public rape (in classrooms), and the kidnapping of faculty members and their children. In response to the New Left uprisings on campuses in the West, a new, amorphous, non-sectarian student movement called Zenkyōtō (the Joint Struggle Committee) made its appearance in Japan. As a 'postmodern' movement, Zenkyōtō attacked what it saw as 'the restrictive structures of modern society: technological rationality, utility, uniformity, and goal-directedness. Complete emancipation from all restrictive ideologies and organizations was the final objective.'<sup>19</sup> Opposed to all rational debate and hierarchical organization, the movement was deeply suspicious of all formal democratic procedures. On the more positive side, it advocated direct or participatory democracy and the cultivation of a sense of personal authenticity, independence or selfhood (variously called *dokuritsushugi*, *jiritsu-shugi*, or *shutaisei*). It also called for spontaneous revolutionary activity and the criticism of internalized social evils (e.g. 'the university within,' or 'Narita within').<sup>20</sup> It stressed that by profiteering in the Korean and Vietnam wars, Japan had once again become the victimizer (*kagaisha*) of Asia. This 'victimizer-consciousness' (*kagaisha-ishiki*) was widely used to indict existing patterns of authority. At the same time, students saw their generation as the 'victim' (*higaisha*) of the monopoly capitalism and fake democracy of the older, hypocritical generation.

In 1969, the National Diet passed the University Control Bill giving the Minister of Education authority to close any university that could not maintain law and order on its own campus. The law took effect on 19 August, and by November the number of campuses under siege had decreased by about three-fourths.<sup>21</sup> The student movement was not only attacked from the outside; it also tended to 'self-destruct'. Violent fights (called *uchigeba*), often resulting in death and injury, erupted among the various revolutionary sects.<sup>22</sup> The utopian idealism of the student movement finally soured and turned into mock heroics, a studied fascination with death and destruction, and sheer anomie.<sup>23</sup>

All parties involved in the Kyodan struggle admit that the turmoil in the universities had a powerful impact on the church. While the squabble in the Kyodan might well have taken place even without it, it is unlikely it would have taken the shape it did had not the universities already passed through similar ordeals. In other words, the university struggle provided the Kyodan radicals with a pattern or model of confrontation which *enabled* the struggle in the church to take place the way it did.

A brief review of the spatial and temporal relations of the two struggles makes their connection quite obvious. Church districts with the most serious problems were located in those parts of Japan where the major student



rebellions had taken place—Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, and Hyogo prefecture. Many radical ministers had churches near the universities.<sup>24</sup> The timing of the church struggle is also significant: it reached its peak of violence (from the fall of 1969 through the spring of 1971) soon after the University Control Law had swept the radicals off the campuses. One pastor sympathetic to the radicals pointed out that many of the students who became leaders in the Kyodan struggle had been relatively passive in the university uprisings. Since the church was their own 'turf'—and since by this time they had become experts in handling 'hypocrites and reactionaries'—the Christian students felt that the controversy in the Kyodan was an opportunity to show their mettle and become leaders in their own right. Whether this pastor's 'deprivation theory' is valid or not is hard to say. What is clear is that by this time these young people had suffered a series of deep moral frustrations. They had seen Japanese democracy renew the hated Security Treaty and offer their country's territory and services to the United States for use in its 'unjust war' with North Vietnam. They had seen the same kind of 'formal' or 'fake' democracy at work in their own church which, only two years after confessing its complicity in the Pacific War, agreed once again to offer the state its money and ideology by participating in Expo 70. On all sides then—in politics, on the campuses, and in the church—they felt themselves surrounded by compromise and corruption. Like their non-Christian comrades in the university struggle, they longed for a life free from the evils of politics, money, war, repression and rationality. They looked for, and in revolutionary praxis may momentarily have found, a life of Pure Activity. I will argue that Pure Activity—the religious experience of flowing, free, unfettered, spontaneous, innocent, or absolute action taught and practiced by Taoism, Zen and other Asian traditions—has deeply colored the Japanese understanding of revolution, praxis, and authenticity.<sup>25</sup>

Against this background, it is little wonder that the ideas, rhetoric, and slogans of the Kyodan radicals were nearly carbon copies of what they had heard on the campuses a few months earlier. 'Destroy the university' (*daigaku kaitai*) became 'destroy the church' (*kyōkai kaitai*). Demands for 'free' or 'independent classes' (*jishu kōza*) turned into calls for 'independent worship services' (*jishu reihai*). Demands for 'open meetings' (*kōkai kaigi*) and 'mass negotiations' (*shūdan kōshō* or *taishū dankō*) were heard both on the campuses and in the pews. Both institutions were plagued by the problems of unelected representation (*baisekisha* or *daihyōsei*) and other basic questions about parliamentary order (*kaigisei*). Student radicals taunted university officials saying that if they called in the police they would be proving once and for all the faculty's collusion with the state. The same gauntlet was thrown down before officials of the church and its seminaries. Calling in the police would be an open confession that the Kyodan was the product of the state and could be sustained only by its power.



Radicals in both struggles spoke the language of Chairman Mao. Radical ministers were called 'opposition pastors' (*zōhan bokushi*) from the Maoist expression *zōhan yūri*, meaning 'there is reason in opposition', or 'opposition has its own logic'. The idea that 'no positions should be excluded' in ministerial examinations was a reflection of the ideological openness of Zenkyoto itself.<sup>26</sup> University and church officials alike were forced by students to prepare *sōkatsu*, position-papers (literally 'syntheses' or 'summaries'), usually of a self-incriminating sort. The revolutionary practice of self-criticism (*jiko-hihan* or *jiko-hitei*) seemed to have an 'elective affinity' with the Christian teaching of repentance—at least the connection was made by the *zōhan bokushi*. Likewise, the students' emphasis on political autonomy (the *dokuritsu-shugi* of the Democratic Youth League) and the 'standing-on-one's-own-feet-ism' (the *jiritsu-shugi* celebrated by the poet Yoshimoto Ryūmei and preached by Zenkyōtō) seemed to resonate, albeit at weird frequencies, with the Protestant stress on individual responsibility and selfhood.<sup>27</sup>

The problem of *shutaisei*, a philosophical term meaning 'subject-ness', autonomy, authenticity or independence, beset church and academe alike.<sup>28</sup> The term was claimed, and used, by both sides in the church struggle. Radicals like Professor Dohi claimed that because the church had been created by the state it had no *shutaisei* until it issued the Confession of War Responsibility. Church and university authorities who called in the police were merely shoring up the inauthentic, heteronomous foundations of their respective organizations. In the eyes of the radicals, the sanctification of parliamentary procedures by the conservatives also ran against the spirit of authenticity. 'When the church which looks in faith to God and Christ gets bogged down by its own organization and rules, it loses its independence and *raison d'être*.'<sup>29</sup> Radical students who invaded the Executive Committee's meeting on 1 September, 1969, allegedly had as their aim making members of the committee 'wrestle with this problem in an authentic way (*shutaiteki ni kono mondai ni torikumu*)'.<sup>30</sup> The term *shutaisei* also crops up in the discussion about the reunion with the Okinawan church (February 1969), radicals and liberals worrying that the Okinawans, overwhelmed by union with the larger church, would lose their *shutaisei*.

Although *shutaisei* was used in Japanese intellectual circles with universalistic overtones, it was also used 'to imply an opposite totalization of a Japanese ethos, in the form of something akin to national character.'<sup>31</sup> Like Yoshimoto's 'standing-on-your-own-feet'—described by the poet himself as the 'nationalism of the common man'—*shutaisei* became a battle cry in the church against acquiescent or 'heteronomous' relations with foreigners.<sup>32</sup> While the church, as a 'foreign religion', could not push the idea of national autonomy too far, *shutaisei* did emerge as a key concept in discussions about



the indigenization or de-westernization of the faith. Conservatives and radicals alike felt that using foreign funds for the support of Japanese church personnel was humiliating. But while conservatives were willing to accept such contributions for 'pioneer projects', the radicals called for still greater self-reliance—in the name of *shutaisei*.<sup>33</sup> As early as 1961 similar concerns had prompted some church leaders to oppose the World Vision evangelistic campaign as a 'foreign mission' to Japan that compromised the independence and integrity of *Japanese* evangelism. Although the Kyodan had failed to take a decisive stand against the renewal of the Security Treaty in 1960, opposition to this campaign may have been, in part, a reflection of the anti-Americanism still in the air. In the controversy over the Christian Pavilion, the concept of *shutaisei* was, again, used by both sides. While radicals held that the pavilion was a surrender of the Kyodan's *shutaisei* to the state, conservatives like Kitamori Kazoh complained that the radicals' secular humanism was a de facto denial of God's own *shutaisei*!<sup>34</sup>

### POLITICAL STRUCTURES

Had a controversy of this magnitude taken place in America, the church probably would have quickly split, and the heretics (i.e. the losing side) would have been banished to the backwoods of Rhode Island or the salt flats of Utah. But it took place in Japan and therefore reflects the social and political structures of that country. Unlike scandals in other contemporary Japanese religions, the problem in the Kyodan happily did not involve the misuse of money, real estate or women. When paper pellets, teacups and chairs were not flying through the air, the Kyodan fight was carried on at a rather high theological altitude. This too sets it apart from other 'typically Japanese' squabbles. What then *was* Japanese about it?

The Kyodan controversy may have been touched off by such issues as the Christian Pavilion, but ultimately it was not a struggle *about* those issues. Had it been a disagreement over issues, it could have been settled without such turmoil. Basically, it was a political problem—not merely in the sense of *who* should make decisions, but *how* they should be made. Each side, in effect, had absolutized and sanctified its own mode of decision-making. Each therefore felt the other had trampled on its absolutes and desecrated what it believed was holy. If my analysis of the situation is correct, the religious issues can be seen virtually as catalysts which 'enabled' long simmering tensions between *contradictory political systems* within the Kyodan to come to the surface and erupt.

To put these political systems in comparative perspective, we might first step back and take a look at a similar problem in a Japanese village. Robert J. Smith describes a nasty affair that took place over the construction of a chicken-processing plant in an agricultural community called Kurusu. While



the problems of Kurusu and the Kyodan may seem unrelated at first sight—church members may accuse me of levity in comparing them at all—we shall see that the extraordinary events touched off by the proposed chicken plant and the Christian Pavilion actually have much in common, and, I venture to add, much to teach us about Japanese ‘politics’.

In 1973, the ‘Clover company’ (Smith’s fictitious name), a subsidiary of a larger corporation, made an offer to set up a broiler-processing plant in Kurusu. At a meeting of the hamlet association, the company’s bid was discussed and four representatives were appointed to pursue the matter in greater detail. Before long, an agreement was struck and papers were signed for the construction of the new plant. Unexpectedly, a group of families became quite upset at this and demanded the contract be nullified at once. They claimed that since the village representatives were only supposed to investigate the offer, they had overstepped their charge by going ahead and concluding an agreement with the company. The representatives, however, stoutly maintained that they had done nothing but carry out the mandate given to them by the village government. This led to a long, bitter controversy which was even covered by outside newspapers and TV stations. ‘Charge and countercharge were hurled; some people had stopped speaking to others; playmates had been separated and forbidden to associate even at school; houses had been stoned and windows broken; denunciatory placards had been posted, and there was even a public demonstration against the project’.<sup>35</sup> Unlike the Christian Pavilion, however, the furor in Kurusu resulted in the cancellation of the contract with Clover so that the chicken-processing plant was never built.

Smith hesitates—wisely I think—to say what really ‘caused’ the to-do in Kurusu. The opposition stressed the environmental hazards of the proposed plant. Chickens, and later their feathers and entrails, would have been trucked right through the middle of the village. The effluent from the plant (including the chickens’ blood) would have been poured into the river, and would finally have entered the community’s irrigation system. Although the company was talking about a plant which would slaughter 1,000 birds a day, some villagers feared the company would build a much larger plant, perhaps like the one built on the coast by the same company that processed 40,000 chickens a day.

Like the struggle in the Kyodan, the Kurusu controversy can be seen as a tug-of-war between traditional and modern politics. Perhaps it even included a bit of the ‘postmodern’ politics discussed below. By traditional politics, I mean the politics of paternalism, consensus, and implicit understandings so typical of ‘old Japan’. By modern politics, I mean the politics of formal rules and democratic procedures one associates with the ‘new Japan’. Unlike traditional politics, decision-making in modern political systems must be



explicit. One senses that the trouble in Kurusu may have been set off by the failure of the protagonists to distinguish between these implicit and explicit procedures and entitlements. The determination of the matter at hand seemed to be rushed through the political system before everyone could have a say. Some people who had initially objected to the project complained that they had not been heard out. In fact, they failed to make their objections explicit. Consequently, no one went home from the original gathering of the hamlet association with a clear 'sense of the meeting'.

The young people in Kurusu added still another dimension to the problem: their opinions seemed *too* explicit. In effect, they were playing politics according to new rules. As one Kurusu resident put it, 'I really don't know how the sides formed, but it seems to me that in the end the more vocal young people won because they are so clever with words—a lot more so than we were when we were young—and they say exactly what they think'.<sup>36</sup> The problem with speaking one's mind is twofold: it causes some to lose face and, in consensual societies, it just is not the 'done thing'. In effect, the young people had abandoned the traditional politics of scripts—explained below—for a modern politics of explicit stands. This caused their elders (those who had concluded the agreement with Clover) to lose face—a problem that grew even worse when the story was broadcast by the mass media. As one villager put it, 'places like Kurusu are a bit like a stage where most of the action goes on with the curtain down'.<sup>37</sup> This, at least, was the way things were supposed to happen in traditional villages. When the curtain suddenly was raised, the actors were caught unawares. Their traditional scripts were ruined. After that the problem became, literally, *how* to act. What rules should be followed? How could the mess be resolved? The controversy actually came to an end without anyone confessing that he had been wrong or had gone too far. As Smith puts it, 'not one of these proud people had ever offered an apology to another for any action taken or word spoken in anger'.<sup>38</sup> From that time, public meetings have been poorly attended 'because everyone is wary of some unpleasant development'.<sup>39</sup>

In short, the controversy in Kurusu seems to have erupted when the time-consuming consensus-building procedures of traditional politics were violated by the swift ('efficient'?) conclusion of a contract. People then began to say 'what they really thought', causing deep embarrassment to those who (probably) had been acting according to the old implicit rules. After this, placards, broken windows and insults began to disrupt the daily routine of the village. As in 'old Japan', symbolic violence was the court of last resort for those who felt they had not been heard.

The controversy in Kurusu is a valuable example of the difficulty of combining the delicate etiquette of traditional politics with the formal rules, explicit stands, and delegation of authority one associates with modern



politics. But before we go on to analyse the politics at work in Kyodan's struggle, we must lay out, in a more general way, the basic political structures we have already touched on in Kurusu.

Broadly speaking, the Japanese have known four different political (i.e. decision-making and tension-managing) systems in their history.

Throughout their history, the Japanese have had considerable exposure to authoritarian and totalitarian rule. Kamishima Jirō calls this 'hard rule'.<sup>40</sup> During the war, the military government brought this style of politics to perfection. In the postwar period, the internal organization of the Japan Communist Party has shown a similar tendency. Although this politics has had a long history in Japan, it is hardly popular. Even during the war, Tōjō Hideki came in for heavy criticism when he began to mimic the histrionics of the European dictators. Although the question of political violence crops up repeatedly in the Kyodan controversy, totalitarianism fortunately has not been the real issue. We may therefore safely set it aside.

Secondly, the Japanese have known and practiced what I shall call 'folk democracy'. Closely allied to the sense of 'folk justice' which developed in the traditional Japanese village, folk democracy is both particularistic and provincial.<sup>41</sup> Like the traditional government of the village, it depends on voices, not votes. It aims at consensus, not majority rule. The public meeting itself, reduced to a recitation of prefabricated scripts, leaves little or no room for individual stands.<sup>42</sup> Since it evolved out of a society politically based on households and not individuals, responsibility for political decisions in a folk democracy is collective and diffuse. Consensus, in this system, is achieved not through rational, public debate—a practice that invites the loss of face—but through the informal persuasion that takes place primarily *before* formal meetings begin.<sup>43</sup> Since each major participant must be given a chance to speak, folk democracy is notoriously time consuming. Often a meeting, or even a series of meetings, will be called, not to solve a problem, but to mull it over and calm everyone's misapprehensions. Although folk democracy could be called 'soft rule', it is generally dominated informally by the power structure of the community. Its consensual processes work in tandem with the invisible authoritarianism of age, wealth, and rank. Successful leaders, however, generally give the impression of reigning, not ruling.<sup>44</sup>

In a consensual political system of this sort, strong or persistent minority views pose a serious problem. As we have seen in Kurusu, a minority which feels itself unfairly treated may resort to some form of real or symbolic violence. Although the abstract notion of rights gained no recognition in traditional Japan, peasant rebellions and other violent disruptions of the community often helped to protect the powerless and restore the consensus-building process itself. Protestors in a folk democracy often have no alternative, constructive program of their own to offer. Their violence is



justified, and *publicly condoned*, not because it clears the way for a better or more rational plan of action, but because it springs from a 'pure heart'. This widely shared understanding of symbolic violence in Japanese folk democracy suggests there may be a deep, unconscious relationship between the country's long history of peasant rebellions and political anarchy, on the one hand, and its religious tradition of Pure Activity, on the other.

The third political system found in Japan can be called formal democracy. A western import, formal democracy contrasts vividly with its *völkisch* predecessor. If folk democracy is a kind of government-by-antechamber, formal democracy is government-by-chamber. Formal democracy depends on votes, and not merely on voices; on stands, and not on scripts. While folk democracy cultivates implicit understandings, formal democracy requires explicit stands. Responsibility in such a system is specific rather than diffuse. Majorities and minorities co-exist on the basis of three fundamental principles: majority rule, the loyalty of the opposition, and a sense of fair play determined by abstract rules. If elected by a sizable majority, the leadership is empowered to assume an authoritarianism of office until its term expires. Needless to say, formal democracy is just as much influenced by ambient social structures as folk democracy is. But modern or formal democracies restrain the political power of majorities by positing various *a priori* civil rights—an idea unknown to folk democracies. Finally, formal democracy rejuvenates (and/or perpetuates) itself not through violence but by periodic elections.

The system of formal democracy which I have just described is, of course, an ideal. Its actual practice, whether in village government, the church, the university, or the Diet itself, is quite a different story. At most crucial points, the Japanese practice of formal democracy is made possible by strategic compromises with the age-old customs of folk democracy. Votes are often heavily influenced by factions and gray officials. The stands an individual takes in public are carefully rehearsed in private with his patron or supporting clique. Sensitive issues will be talked over at dinner parties (*kondankai*) and other informal gatherings before they are taken up in public. Commonly, more time will be devoted to the presentation of reports (the modern equivalent of scripts) than to the discussion of individual stands. All of this takes time. Like the skilful village headman, the modern government, religious or academic leader is careful to give the impression that he is merely presiding over meetings or mediating between conflicting parties. Thus the leadership style of Japanese democracy is basically 'transcendental'. In Western eyes, Japanese leaders, even prime ministers, may therefore seem to be weak, chronically ambiguous, or even devious. Leaders who do take a strong or clear-cut stand are routinely cut down for their 'egocentric views' or 'high-handed ways'. The system itself therefore tends to generate a style of



leadership that *seems* structurally weak. Truly strong and resourceful leaders can, of course, manipulate the system to their own advantage. Those determined to be *someone* can do so by cultivating a congenial humility calculated to inspire the admiration of the masses forced by tradition to give the appearance of wanting to be *no one*. The system will even tolerate a few charismatics, as long as they are hearty, humane chaps wise enough to refrain from 'making waves'. Like the leaders of the traditional village, the modern formal democrat must co-operate with the Powers That Be. The system breaks down only when a truly weak leader appears, i.e. a person who is unable to translate the ritual weakness of leadership into *de facto* power and action.

In spite of its election system, formal democracy generally allows powerful cliques to continue in office for decades. Little wonder, then, that student radicals in the late '60s rejected the whole system as 'fake democracy'. The student movement introjected still another element—our fourth system—into this already complex array of political possibilities, one based on the notions of 'participatory democracy' and 'revolutionary autonomy' (*kakumei shutaisei*). What they meant, or tried to mean, by participatory democracy was basically the same as the call for direct political action by the New Left in the West. In Japan, as in the West, the idea of participatory democracy entailed a deep distrust of formally constituted assemblies and duly elected officials. Democratic formalism was therefore regarded as just one more of the Establishment's tricks.

The idea of 'revolutionary autonomy' is more interesting. At best, it challenged the formal democrats to take a serious look at the real meaning, and burdens, of political responsibility. At worst, it simply dissolved politics by reducing it to the chaos of the kangaroo court, or the narcissism of revolutionary self-grooming. In the end, it made demands on the Japanese personality and social system that were as difficult to meet as the challenge of formal, Western democracy had been in the early Meiji period. With their long tradition of 'dependent collectivism',<sup>45</sup> *shutaisei* was as mysterious to the Japanese as Protestant individualism itself.<sup>46</sup> It was therefore no accident that many students who cultivated a 'postmodern' taste for revolutionary autonomy were later 're-collectivized' by radical groups and sent out to destroy each other in the sectarian Armageddon of *uchigeba*.<sup>47</sup>

It was in this cauldron of political contradictions that the Kyodan struggle came to full boil. To members of the church, it seemed that the Kyodan had been polarized, and paralyzed, by two irreconcilable western political systems: the modified formal democracy of the Kyodan's government (*kaigisei*), on the one hand, and the participatory democracy of the radicals, on the other. At least the *theological* debate between the two sides suggests that this was their understanding of the situation. But this is not all there was



to it. (As Peter Berger once remarked, 'the first wisdom of sociology is this—things are not what they seem.'<sup>48</sup>) What was universally overlooked was the similarity of the radicals and the conservatives due, in part, to the impact of folk democracy on both sides.

Neither side in the Kyodan struggle can claim a monopoly on good works or progressive policies. None of the conservative leaders I interviewed had ever voted for the ruling conservative party, the Liberal Democrats. Most seem to support the Socialists or the Social Democrats. Some radicals, on the other hand, are inclined to a cynical quietism and never bother to vote.<sup>49</sup> Some conservative congregations sponsor impressive social action and educational programs, while some radical pastors have nothing to show for their activism but a church-organized pre-school run for their own financial gain. Among the conservatives are people who both supported the Confession of War Responsibility and opposed the Christian Pavilion. Both sides, influenced by the idealism of national autonomy (*shutaisei*), would like to see the Kyodan become less dependent on foreign aid.<sup>50</sup> As a result of this emphasis on autonomy, each side criticizes the compromises (and the subsequent loss of *shutaisei*) of the other. Both entertain vague ideas about de-westernizing the church. As the controversy grew, each side used the symbols of the faith to justify its own position. In both cases, theological reflection seemed to trail behind positions already taken in the heat of furious battle. Both drained religious symbols of their mystery and deeper meaning, turning them into thin, unnourishing analogies for political action or ecclesiastical maneuvering. Both sides—and not just the radicals—could therefore be charged with 'secularizing' the Gospel. Both have consciously assumed a 'prophetic' stance *vis à vis* the other. The radical minister from the Kansai whom I mentioned earlier says that he identifies himself with 'the angry Christ' who drove the money changers from the temple. But conservatives also talk about 'cleansing the temple', i.e. by getting rid of the radicals once and for all. One conservative leader in Osaka complains that, at every critical juncture, Kyodan leaders have blindly followed the line laid down by the New Left and the liberal (or quasi-Marxist) academic establishment. 'I alone said no!' he boasts. Neither side believes that Christ's words about turning the other cheek were meant to be taken literally. If it is true, as conservatives sometimes allege, that non-Christian radicals were brought in to help disrupt church meetings, it would seem that both sides have been ready to avail themselves of forces outside the church.

When one adds up these similarities, one comes to the surprising conclusion that the protagonists have mistakenly been labeled radicals and conservatives. (In this paper, I have employed these terms so commonly used in the church only *faute de mieux*). In remarks that mix insight with bitterness, one so-called conservative observes that 'at root the Kyodan



problem is not a struggle between a 'church faction' and a 'society faction', or even between 'conservatives' and 'progressives'. It is a vigorous conflict among progressives who are divided over whether or not physical force will be allowed to overturn democratic procedures.<sup>51</sup>

In many respects, the ecclesiology of the Kyodan conservatives was a sanctification of formal democracy. As members of Rengo like to put it, 'the chairman of the church assembly, and the One who calls the meeting to order, is Jesus Christ himself.' From this they conclude that any disturbance of the church's *kaigisei* is an act of disobedience against Christ. But the order that really developed in the church seemed to be one controlled by the Same Old Faces year after year in an unholy succession going back to the unpurged wartime leadership. Radicals therefore tended to look upon the Kyodan's *kaigisei* with the same suspicion country rebels directed toward the ruling households and cliques in the villages. Are the leaders of the church truly responsible, informed, and concerned? Or are they merely those who have been 'formally elected by the majority?' Had it not been by majority vote that the churches had created the Kyodan in the first place, offering the denomination to the state as an ideological puppet? Were not the 'democratic' procedures of the church the same ones the Diet had used to 'ram through' the renewal of the Security Treaty? Convinced that the rules of formal democracy were stacked against them, the radicals believed that symbolic deeds made more sense than rational debates. Christ in the temple would henceforth be their model of political action. Like the dramatic acts of the biblical prophets, their revolutionary *praxis* would stop the majority in its tracks.<sup>52</sup>

Or so they thought. As it turned out, political traditionalism had a dampening effect on the ambitions of both sides. In Japan, where people prefer to 'cover up things that stink' (*kusai mono ni futa o suru*), as the saying goes, a truly free, public discussion of problems generally does not come about easily.<sup>53</sup> Both sides in the Kyodan's struggle showed great hesitation to enter into open conversations with the opposite party. Radical students feared that by participating in a rational dialogue they would be forced to compromise their life of Pure Activity and lose their *shutaisei*. Conservatives were equally reluctant to talk with the radicals. Dialogue only seemed to reward their violence. Many conservatives therefore came to regard the 'way of dialogue' (*taiwa rosen*) as the spineless leadership's 'way of making deals' (*torihiki rosen*) with radicals behind everyone else's back. We have seen that because Japanese folk democracy is uneasy about open debate, discussions have to be carefully scripted, rehearsed and staged. Since this takes time, any discussion that is 'over and done with' quickly is suspect, almost by definition. From Kurusu's Clover affair, we have learned how costly a speedy decision can be. In the church, all sides complained that major decisions—



especially the church union of 1941, the proclamation of war responsibility in 1967, and the decision to reunite with the Okinawan church in 1969—had been made with undue haste. As one minister put it, 'since democracy takes time, we should not be in a hurry'.

Except when it falls into strong hands, like Suzuki Masahisa's, the moderatorship of the Kyodan is prone to all of the structural weaknesses of folk democracy.<sup>54</sup> Moderator Ii, who presided over some of the stormiest meetings of the church, initially averred that he had no 'perspective' of his own and therefore refused to say in what direction he intended to lead the church. Had he maintained this low profile—so common in folk democracies—he might have survived unscathed. Unfortunately, he seemed to drift into a more 'radical' definition of his role, claiming that the moderator should be 'the leading pitcher of the team, not an umpire'. In the end, he seemed fit for neither role. Although he seemed to favour the radicals, the radicals themselves found him an indecisive people-pleaser (*happō bijin*). Conservatives considered his 'way of dialogue' an appeasement policy and claimed that he was merely acting as the 'robot of the radicals'. What both sides failed to see was the unlikelihood that leadership *structured in this way* would ever be able, on its own, to restore a working consensus in the church.

How, then, did the struggle come to an end, when and where it did?

It would be naive, of course, to expect that the controversy would be resolved the way the New Testament says enmity should be overcome, i.e. through confession, repentance, and reconciliation. The dénouement of the Kyodan controversy rewards a social psychology based on lower expectations. As in Kurusu, no one apologized. The *odium theologicum* was finally overcome not in large, 'head-on' debates, but in small, informal groups. One person observed to me that people who seemed to get along quite well in small groups became hostile once again when the group became large enough to become formal. In Osaka, when the district assembly was finally reconvened after an interruption of ten years, the floor was opened for a discussion of the whole affair. *No one rose to speak*. In some districts, 'deliberations' (*kyōgikai*) replaced formal meetings (*sōkai*). This provided a more leisurely forum for smoothing out ruffled feathers. To give the radicals a hearing, new committees were established to work on the problems of 'the church and social action.' In some areas, district assemblies and sub-committees labored month after month on *sōkatsu* that would serve as a symbol of the restoration of Christian fellowship. The effect of these compromises has been the imposition of a dual or two-tiered structure on the church—at both the national and district levels—a pattern that actually was already beginning to develop under Moderator Suzuki.<sup>55</sup> This consists of an upper stratum of ecclesiocrats and activists who control official church proclamations and policies, on the one hand, and a lower stratum made up of



basically conservative or politically indifferent pastors and local congregations preoccupied with evangelism, the cure of souls, and the repair of the church roof, on the other. This was the dual structure that Ōki Hideo is pointing to when he criticizes the 'lack of real linkage between the Kyodan's superstructure and the local churches'.<sup>56</sup>

Finally, time itself helped to heal the wounds of the church. Radical students graduated from the universities, got married and started to raise families—events known to have a lethal effect on revolutionary zeal. Some radicals left the church. Many conservatives began to devote more of their time and energy to Rengo than to the Kyodan itself. Some of their older members died and put the worldly battles of the *ecclesia militans* behind them once and for all. But most church members simply remained as indifferent to the problems of the Kyodan as they were to the larger issues of faith and society. The moralism the Kyodan had inherited from both Confucianism and Protestantism discouraged most members from seriously considering problems that could not be solved by, or reduced, to personal piety. Even studied indifference must therefore be credited with a pacifying effect.

#### FINALLY . . .

The Kyodan controversy is interesting, first of all, for the things it was not. It was not a struggle between rival denominations. By the time the controversy began, denominational identities had largely been forgotten. It was not a battle between fundamentalists and liberals. Both sides had been exposed to large doses of theological sophistication. It was not a confrontation between a church and a sect. Churchly and sectarian tendencies were at work on both sides. I have also argued that, in the end, it was not even a matter of issues or a contest between the rival demands of social action and evangelism.

Our study of the major historical and structural influences on the uprising in the Kyodan does not enable us to explain why it took place. But it does help us understand what enabled it to take place the way it did. It also throws light on the question why it lasted as long as it did. In the first place, as a voluntary association, the Kyodan holds a rather special place in Japanese society.

The internal disagreements and struggles within the Kyodan during the era of reappraisals from 1968 mirrored the growing polarization within the larger society. The church as one of the few genuinely voluntary groups in Japanese society was therefore one of the few places where such conflicts could freely come out into the open. The bitterness of the disagreements could not be so freely expressed and acted upon in legislative forums, political parties, schools, trade unions, social welfare organizations, or businesses, for all of these organizations were responsible in one form or another to act under public authority. In a word, when members of these other groups became unruly, the leaders of these



organizations had the right and the duty to call in the police to restore order. . . This was why a denomination like the Kyodan could become polarized in both ideology and activity and stay that way long after universities, trade unions, and political parties had gone through the same period of chaos and returned to something resembling business as usual.<sup>57</sup>

The church, of course, had no equivalent to the University Control Law to invoke against its radicals. Unlike university students, no one ever 'graduates' from the church. Since members can take their leave only by dying or by voluntarily dropping out, all were locked into the problem as long as they wanted to remain in the denomination. Both sides, for practical and theological reasons, abhorred the idea of becoming still another Protestant sect and therefore refused to give ground to the opposition. The only way to win was to convert the whole Kyodan to one's own side.

Another reason for the continuation of the struggle was the tendency of the Japanese to avoid unpleasant or 'sticky' situations. Here again church members resemble the villagers of Kurusu. Although schooled by folk democracy to accept symbolic violence passively, many refused to attend meetings where they might be confronted by extremists, challenged to take a public stand, or put in some other embarrassing position. For this reason, districts like Tokyo have found it almost impossible to get the quorum required to hold meetings.

In the final analysis, however, the reason the struggle lasted as long as it did was because it was not merely a disagreement over issues. As we have seen, it was a struggle between parliamentary and radical progressives—both deeply influenced by the etiquette and procedures of a pre-modern political tradition—over the right way to make decisions and manage disagreements. But ultimately, the Kyodan struggle was even more than this. It is an example of the fundamental sociological contradictions that arise whenever a church takes a stand on public or moral issues in a class-based, pluralist society. The problem here lies neither in the prophetic self-image of church leaders, nor in the democratic polyarchy of secular society, but in their combination. At the 11th General Assembly of the Kyodan held in 1960, two basic questions were raised which still await decisive answers. The first was: when the church takes a stand on a political issue does it violate the civil rights of members who happen to disagree with that stand? In other words, does it pre-empt their own political autonomy? The second: does the Executive Committee have the authority to take such stands in the name of the church? In other words, 'who speaks for the church?' These questions are an expression of the basic problem all churches face as inclusive, but heterogeneous institutions in a pluralistic society run according to the game-rules of formal democracy.<sup>58</sup> After 1969, radical demands for a 'participatory democracy' (which, in turn, threatened to drag the church into the quagmire



of revolutionary *anomie*) transformed this political dilemma of the modern church (East and West) into a constitutional crisis. I have tried to show that what made this crisis a 'typically Japanese' one was the pervasive influence of folk democracy on both sides. In the end, both 'radicals' and 'conservatives' were forced to decide what elements of the indigenous political tradition of Japan—the practice of time-consuming consensus-building, symbolic violence (or 'Pure Activity'), the implicit 'rights' of the powerless, collective responsibility, and the invisible authoritarianism of status—should be incorporated into the government of the church.

## NOTES

- 1 This study was made possible by research grants from Kwansei Gakuin University in Nishinomiya, Japan. I would like to thank T. Walter Herbert, Jr., Chalmers Johnson, Mark Reames, and David Reid for their careful reading of the manuscript and helpful comments.
- 2 While originally used to protect individuals from tear-gas, and to conceal their identity, face towels, together with the omnipresent helmets and staves, became a costume of protest that continues to be used in public demonstrations.
- 3 The word for these cudgels in Japanese is *gebabō*, a compound of the German term *Gewalt* (force) and the Japanese word *bō* (stick).
- 4 The radicals are often referred to euphemistically in Japanese as 'problem posers' (*mondai teikisha*).
- 5 Although the population of Japan increased by 12% between 1970 (104,665,171) and 1980 (117,060,396), membership in the Kyodan was down by 7%. (*Nihon Kirisutokyōdan Nenkan*. Tokyo: Nihon Kirisutokyōdan Sōmukyoku, 1968–1983 (fold-outs); *Population of Japan*. Tokyo: Statistics Bureau, Prime Minister's Office, Vol. I, 1982, p. 2). Between 1970 and 1977 the membership of the church dropped from 205,051 to 187,685, down 8%. After that, it has grown slightly, reaching 191,971 in 1982, up 2%. Those regarded by the church as 'active resident communicants' have declined from 94% of the membership in 1948 to about 50% in 1982. A somewhat more rapid decrease in their numbers was noted during the Kyodan struggle. This was followed by a modest recovery. (*Kyodan News Letter*. Tokyo: United Church of Christ in Japan, No. 133 (March 20, 1979), pp. 2–3). Average church attendance held steady from 1948 to 1968. Then it fell from 55,711 per Sunday to a low of 44,449 in 1974, down 20%. By 1982, however, attendance had nearly returned to its 1968 level: 55,149. Church school enrollments and attendance, which had been declining since 1948, fell still more rapidly during the first years of the controversy. Recent years have shown some improvement. The number of baptisms, which had been falling gradually since 1948, decreased from a total of 4,558 in 1970 to 2,654 in 1979, a drop of 40% for adults and 54% for children. Some of the decline in infant baptisms may be due to a general decline in the birth rate which began in 1973 (*Kōsei-hakushō*. Tokyo: Kōsei-shō, pp. 544–545.) But the 24% increase in infant baptisms seen between 1979 and 1982 took place in spite of a birth rate that continued to decline.
- 6 Prof. Kitamori is the author of the well-known book, *The Theology of the Pain of God* (London, SCM Press, 1966).



- 7 This included many of the members of the TUTS faculty who participated in a private capacity.
- 8 His writings had a significant impact on the student radicals in the New Left movement, Zenkyōtō.
- 9 Tagawa Kenzō, a New Testament scholar and Kyodan layman, was fired from his position at International Christian University in Tokyo when he espoused the cause of the radical students.
- 10 Actually, whether anybody seriously held this position or not is still unclear. What is clear is that the theological faculties at TUTS and other seminaries accused student radicals of taking this stand and espousing the heresy of 'Jesus-ism' (*Iesu-kyō*).
- 11 See Kitamori Kazoh, 'Kyū ten san kyōjukai: watakushi no sōkatsu ni kaete,' *Fukuin to sekai* (September, 1971), pp. 69–74.
- 12 Dohi Akio, *Nihon Purotesutanto kyōkai no seiritsu to tenkai*. Tokyo, Nihon Kirisutokyōdan Shuppankyoku, 1975 p. 321.
- 13 Ibid., p. 329.
- 14 Ibid., p. 319.
- 15 One could compare the pavilion to the Narita airport which also became a symbol of the radicals' struggle against state power and capitalism in the 1970s. Narita was metaphorically reified by students and pictured as the 'Narita within' (*uchinaru Narita*), an evil spirit to be exorcized through the ritual of revolutionary self-criticism. Christian radicals urged the churches to 'take up the Narita airport from the viewpoint of the Gospel.'
- 16 This document was drawn up as a result of a visit to Japan by Dr Martin Niemöller who explained to the Japanese leaders the significance of the Stuttgart Confession, a document drawn up by the German church only five months after the end of the war. The Japanese Confession was a response to stinging criticism by Korean and Filipino participants in various Far Eastern youth conferences held by the church. Another stimulus was the Japanese peace movement which caused a number of Christians to reflect on the role their church had played during the war. Most of the discussion about 'war guilt' had centered on what Japanese Christians did to the churches in Asia during the war. Less has been said about what was done to Western missionaries who were dismissed and sent home in the late 1930s as an 'embarrassment' to the Japanese church. When they returned to Japan after the war, the missionaries, eager to resume their work, largely, and liberally, avoided discussions of the Kyodan's wartime collaboration with the military regime.
- 17 For the complete English text of this and other 'Documents of the United Church of Christ in Japan,' see *The Japan Christian Quarterly*, XLV: 3, (Summer, 1979), pp. 172–176.
- 18 I am making the distinction between causes and enablements not merely in order to extol the free will of sociological 'agents' or the 'subjects' of history, but to give expression to the 'methodological humility' with which historians and sociologists should approach complex movements and events. By an 'enablement' I do not mean a weak or soft cause. Unlike causes, 'enablements' imply environments in which the relationship between actors and their surroundings is complex and 'open', i.e., where there is room for surprises and maneuvering. Perhaps more important than so-called free will is the *looseness of situations* and the multiplicity of factors and hidden relationships at work at each moment. For example, in the history of religions, the development of a new technology (such as hunting,



agriculture or mechanics) does not 'cause' new religions to appear. On the contrary, by opening up new possibilities (such as the symbolologies of blood, bones, seeds, and machines) technology 'enables' new ideas and images to take shape which may, *or may not*, gain acceptance. While the words 'cause', 'impact', 'influence', are nearly unavoidable from the point of view of style, they have unfortunate connotations derived from tired speculation on the collision of billiard balls or on the concept of mechanical causation. While direct causation is obviously indispensable in natural science and in the study of relatively simple socio-historical events, I find it insufficient for the kind of analysis I am undertaking in this paper. For the distinction between positive and negative enablements see Winston Davis, 'The Role of Religion, Magic and Morals in the Development of the Far East', forthcoming.

- 19 Donald F. Wheeler, 'Japan's Postmodern Student Movement,' in *Changes in the Japanese University: A Comparative Perspective*, William K. Cummings, Ikuo Amano, and Kazuyuki Kitamura (eds.). New York, Praeger Publishers, 1979, p. 209.
- 20 See footnote 15.
- 21 Wheeler, op. cit., p. 207.
- 22 A combination of the Japanese word *uchi* (internal) and the German word *Gewalt* (force), *uchigeba* is slang for the fighting that has taken place between the Chūkaku-ha, the Kakumaru-ha, the Kuro-heri and other radical sects. The annual number of clashes ranged from 200 to 300 until 1975 when the figures finally began to taper off. In 1980, the total number of *uchigeba*-related deaths stood at 80. See Murata Kiyooki, 'Savage Infighting: "Uchigeba" Among Radical Groups Goes on Relentlessly,' *The Japan Times* (7 November, 1980), p. 16.
- 23 These themes were reflected in student manifestos, hand-outs and other publications. They were also seen in graffiti painted on the walls of occupied buildings. The following are samples taken from the walls of Kwansei Gakuin University in Nishinomiya: 'Utopia will consist of the everlasting handsome and beautiful, like us.' 'I live for love and revolution.' 'Deny life.' 'Blues are our poetry.' 'To die, to die, to die in the barricades.' 'It is not an ethical sense that drives me to struggle. Only the sense that I live is floating between the high sky and wide ocean [sic].' 'I only hope that someone will play a burial melody which will be in harmony with continual tones of machine guns and the cries of a new strife and victory.'
- 24 Some of these churches let students use their facilities as infirmaries and places of sanctuary. Younger pastors, recent university graduates themselves, were easily persuaded by the students that the real function of Japanese higher education was to crank out 'pliant stooges' for the capitalist regime. Some of these pastors brought food to students manning the barricades and even conducted worship services for them.
- 25 These religious traditions often set up a contrast between Pure and Mundane Activity, the latter being the plodding, rehearsed, calculating, compromising or 'responsible' Activity of everyday life. For a general analysis of Pure Activity in Japanese culture see Winston Davis, 'Ittoen: the Myths and Rituals of Liminality,' *History of Religions*, 15; 1 (August 1975), pp. 13-27. James. M. Phillips, in his book *From the Rising of the Sun: Christians and Society in Contemporary Japan* (Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1981, p. 36), rightly notes the connection between the Pure Activity of the New Left and the tradition of the



samurai: '... even though they bear 'New' in their name, New Left representatives in Japan were building on a centuries-old samurai mentality that spurned compromise of any kind with 'purity' of doctrine and relished no cause better than a hopelessly lost cause.' Applied to rebellion and revolution, Pure Activity has also given rise to a playful, trickster-like mentality. For example, in 1886, Tokutomi Sohō complained of his friends in the Popular Rights movement that they 'look on politics as a kind of sport, a form of amusement like letting off fireworks.' (R. P. Dore, 'The Legacy of Tokugawa Education', in Marius B. Jansen, (ed.), *Changing Japanese Attitudes Towards Modernization*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1965, p. 117.)

- 26 See Fujita Ken, 'Gakusei undō no Nihonteki tokusei to daigaku kaikaku ni tsuite,' *Kaihō*, no. 15, (March, 1969) esp. pp. 53-54.
- 27 Kazuko Tsurumi, 'Student Movements in 1960 and 1969: Continuity and Change,' in Shun'ichi Takayanagi and Kimitada Miwa, eds., *Postwar trends in Japan: Studies in Commemoration of Rev. Aloysius Miller*, S. J. Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1975 pp. 216-219.
- 28 See J. Victor Koschmann, 'The Debate on Subjectivity in Postwar Japan: Foundations of Modernism as a Political Critique,' *Pacific Affairs*, 54: 4, (Winter, 1981-1982), pp. 609-631.
- 29 Dohi, op. cit., p. 282.
- 30 Ibid., p. 327.
- 31 Koschmann, op. cit., p. 629.
- 32 Tsurumi, op. cit., p. 218.
- 33 Former TUTS president Ōki Hideo attacked the 'radicalized' leadership of the church for its dependence on foreign support which he likens to 'the foreign aid that propped up the Saigon government long after it had lost popular support.' *The Japan Christian Quarterly*, XLV; 3 (Summer, 1979) p. 189.
- 34 Kitamori, op. cit., pp. 69-74.
- 35 Robert J. Smith, *Kurusu: The Price of Progress in a Japanese Village, 1951-1975*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1978 p. 231.
- 36 Ibid., p. 238.
- 37 Ibid., p. 233.
- 38 Ibid., p. 246.
- 39 Ibid., p. 239.
- 40 *Jōmin no seijigaku*. Tokyo: Dentō to Gendaisha, 1972, pp. 5-8.
- 41 For the concept of folk justice, see Winston Davis, 'Pilgrimage and World Renewal: A Study of Religion and Social Values in Tokugawa Japan, Part. II., *History of Religions*, 23: 3 (February, 1984), pp. 209-210, 219-220.
- 42 I am indebted to Prof. Nakane Chie for the concept of 'scripts'.
- 43 In Japanese, this is called *nemawashi* after the practice of 'binding the roots' of plants before they are transplanted.
- 44 In this respect, folk democracy is closer to the 'soft rule' of the emperors and aristocrats of ancient Japan than to the 'hard rule' of the military dictators of medieval and modern times.
- 45 Tsurumi, op. cit., p. 217.
- 46 From the point of view of the history of religions, one might argue that the only *shutaisei* produced by the Japanese tradition was that of the shaman. I suspect that this is why Western scholars so often feel that Nichiren and other religious leaders look like 'real individuals' or 'prophets'.
- 47 Others sheepishly returned to the more comfortable life of the university or



- seminary. A number of students, emotionally burned out by the struggle, or unable to get letters of recommendation from their teachers, dropped out of sight, and, to this day, continue to do menial work here and there.
- 48 Peter L. Berger, *Invitation to Sociology*. Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday Books, 1963, p. 23.
  - 49 One senses a deep moralism running through the politics of both sides. Many vote Socialist simply because they oppose the 'money politics' of the Liberal Democrats. While conservative pastors seldom preach on social issues, sermons by radicals can hardly be called political harangues.
  - 50 By 1980, the Kyodan was able to support about 25% of its 245 Western missionaries with Japanese funds. Most of these missionaries seem to be young 'missionary associates' working in Japan as language teachers. Nearly one-third of the support for the remaining missionaries also comes from Japan. Some assistance for theological education and religious broadcasting continues to come from abroad. (*Kyodan News Letter*. Tokyo: United Church of Christ in Japan, No. 151 (20 January, 1981) p. 5.)
  - 51 Ōki Hideo, 'Reflections on the Kyodan Problem,' *The Japan Christian Quarterly*, op. cit., p. 169. Ōki himself was one of the drafters of the Kyodan's 'Fundamental Policy for Social Action,' which states that 'the social action of a church, as a fulfillment of the church's social responsibility, includes the whole realm of social practice and social welfare work'—hardly the words of a reactionary. Ibid., p. 174.
  - 52 In retrospect, one wonders how new or radical the students' tactics were. Was their prophetic wrath not basically similar to the symbolic violence Japanese rebels traditionally had used to block unpopular decisions? Was their inarticulate effervescence so different from the irrational spontaneity of anarchists and the holy men of old? Today, as one looks back on the turmoil of the Japanese churches and universities, the revolutionary praxis of the students—with its violent assaults on social, linguistic and sexual mores—seems to have been no more than a diverting *entr'acte* in the drama of 'fake democracy' and 'monopoly capitalism.'
  - 53 Public debate, as we know it, was introduced in Japan only in the late nineteenth century by Fukuazawa Yukichi. Before that, discussions of policy had taken place only in private between rulers and their advisors, or in the carefully orchestrated scenarios of folk democracy. Debate itself presupposes a kind of public space that simply did not exist in Japan until modern times, that of the *agora* or *forum*.
  - 54 Suzuki himself was by no means universally admired—a common complaint being that he handled such problems as the Confession of War Responsibility 'like a dictator or a Methodist bishop!'
  - 55 An almost identical bifurcation can be seen in politically active mainline denominations in North America and Europe. From a structural point of view, this allows religious institutions to speak out on public issues in spite of their own internal differences. But from a practical standpoint, it means that ecclesiastical pronouncements generally mean very little indeed, except, of course, to the ecclesiocrats who are pleased to make them.
  - 56 *The Japan Christian Quarterly*, op. cit., p. 189.
  - 57 Phillips, op. cit., pp. 32-33.
  - 58 By 'heterogeneous' I refer to the social, theological, and ideological differences between the individuals and families making up a church. Internal heterogeneity



within 'the body of Christ' is probably the single most important reason why mainstream denominations usually must keep silent on major social and economic issues, and why, when they do speak out, they usually are forced to make the implicit, pragmatic distinction between religion (the local level) and political rhetoric (the translocal, ecclesiocratic level) I have just described.

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# THE PARADOX OF TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE OF GOD IN AFRICAN RELIGIONS

## A SOCIO-HISTORICAL EXPLANATION

**Emefie Ikenga-Metuh**

The paradox of the transcendence and immanence of God is not peculiar to African religions. Rather, it is one example of what Evans-Pritchard calls 'the unresolved paradoxes and ambiguities which are found in different religious systems'. It is a universal human experience, he says, that 'Divinity to man is both friend and foe, whom one summons for aid and asks to turn away, seeking at the same time union and separation from him'.<sup>1</sup> He calls this the paradox of a 'deus absconditus' hidden god, in the sky, and 'deus revelatus', revealed god, in human affairs.

Different writers in African religion have expressed this paradox in different ways. Among the Nupe, says Nadel, 'the most common and most strongly emphasised comment on the nature of the deity is 'Soko Lokpa', God is far away, 'and yet in a different more mystic sense he is present always and everywhere'.<sup>2</sup> This is what Taylor called 'the dichotomy of primal religion'; God is said to be withdrawn and far away. He has no temples, sacrifices, and festivals, and yet, he is often in people's lips and thoughts and is invoked and approached for some of the most basic human needs.<sup>3</sup>

His immanence is seen in the numerous praise-names, sayings, proverbs, and invocations which express the omnipresence of God and his care for men. Examples of these abound. Some praise-names call him, 'He who is everywhere', 'Infinity of the forest'. Some proverbs say; 'If you would tell God, tell it to the wind'; 'The cattle shelter under the same tree with God'; 'God drives away flies for a tailless cow'. 'An enemy may sound the drum of your downfall, but God will not let it sound'. 'God is in front, he is at the back'. People pray to God often in times of need.

This paper will be discussed in two parts. In the first part, I give summaries of two of the many explanations of the paradox and immanence of God in African religions given by different authors. In the second part, I shall compare the ethnographic data and culture history of two adjacent African



societies, one of which has elaborate cult of God, while the other has not. The scope is to determine how far these theories can be validated by available ethnographic and culture—historical data, and thus identify what factors determine the transcendence and immanence of God in a socio-cultural context.

### EXPLANATIONS OF THE PARADOX

Many authors have given explanations for the 'withdrawal' of God in traditional religions.<sup>4</sup> The two explanations which directly touch on the paradox of the transcendence and immanence of God in African religions are those given by Charles Long and Robin Horton. Long's explanation is socio-historical, while Horton's is socio-philosophical or intellectualist as he would call it. Yet the two explanations have many points of similarity. In fact, I will argue here that they are complimentary, and that any adequate explanation of the paradox of the transcendence and immanence of God in African religions should draw from both explanations.

Charles Long seeks the explanation of the 'withdrawal' of African 'High Gods' in the religious history of West African peoples. According to him, several phases in the cultural history of West African peoples could be identified—the *Pre-Soil* cultivators, probably nomads, succeeded successively by the *Old-Hoe* culture, the *Higher-Hoe* culture, and finally the *Plough* culture. The religion of the nomadic pre-soil cultivators was probably the worship of the Supreme Being as a sky-god. However, the course of this religious history shows that 'in every case . . . there is already a development from the High God to more specific deities.' Thus the prominence of the cult of concrete fertility deities seems to be related to the discovery and diffusion of agriculture in West Africa. Long therefore, concludes that the constant and variable features of the African High God, including the varying degree of His immanence in the different African religious systems, could only be studied and understood in the context of the religious and cultural history of the people. For, says he:

'Religious apprehensions and response occur in history, and thus the meaning of any religious symbol must be sought in the enhancement and re-evaluation of the history and culture in which it occurs'.

Thus Long linked the problem of the 'withdrawal' of God with the process of religious change in Africa. However, he did not outline the principles underlying this process of change. Horton's explanation supplies this need. It clearly spells out these underlying principles which determine the development of the cult of the Supreme Being in an African cosmological system.

Horton's explanation of the paradox of the immanence and transcendence of God in African religions is best developed in his article, 'African



Conversion' published in 1971.<sup>6</sup> For Horton, traditional religious beliefs, are best seen as 'theoretical systems intended for the explanation, prediction and control of space-time events': So that any major changes in the people's socio-cultural life, would precipitate a rationalisation—reordering their religious beliefs 'in a new and more coherent way' to be more in line with their new experiences.<sup>7</sup>

The salient feature of the 'typical traditional (African) cosmology', according to him, is its two-tiered arrangement of 'unobservables'. In the first tier are the lesser spirits, which are mainly concerned with the affairs of the local community and its environment—the microcosm. In the second tier is the Supreme Being concerned with the world as a whole—the macrocosm. In the traditional microcosmic African societies, most attention is paid to the activity of the lesser spirits while the idea of the High God is relatively undeveloped. This leaves him 'otiose'. However, as a microcosmic society is exposed to macrocosmic influences, the boundaries of the microcosm weaken, the lesser spirits would be seen to be in flight, and the High God to be taking control. For, in order to cope with the realities of the macrocosmic society, the idea of the High God has to be greatly developed, in particular the idea of his moral concern, because only the High God can sanction the codes of conduct required for wider intercourse. This, argues Horton, provides explanation for the mass drift from traditional religions to Christianity and Islam at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when improvement in communications, and innovations which came at the wake of colonialism, greatly widened the boundaries of the microcosm for many Africans. Islam and Christianity which came almost at the same time played merely a catalyst role—'accelerators of changes which were in the air anyway'.<sup>8</sup>

Horton's explanation has aroused a considerable amount of enthusiasm as well as much criticism among students of religious change in Africa. There is no doubt that Horton's explanation (if validated) provides a satisfactory philosophico-theoretical frame for explaining and predicting the degree of the 'withdrawal' or immanence of God in the religious system of any African society. The two major criticisms which are relevant to our discussions here are first, that Horton does not offer any example of these processes happening outside the influences of Islam and Christianity; second, that some ethnographic data suggest that exposures to microcosmic influences sometimes result in intensification of spiritist cults, rather than the development of the cult of the Supreme Being. Here, I present pre-modern and pre-Christian ethnographic data from two neighbouring African societies one of which has a relatively developed cult of the High God, while the other has not. In the remaining part of this paper I will try to show that ethnography and cultural history of the two societies substantially validate and clarify Long and Horton's hypotheses but challenge some of their conclusions.



*CULT OF GOD IN IGBO AND YORUBA ETHNOGRAPHY*

The Igbo and the Yoruba peoples live within the equatorial rain-forest region of Southern Nigeria. Both are settled agriculturists. However, the social organisation of both groups differ considerably. For, whereas the Yoruba have developed a highly urbanised society organised around largely city-state Kingdoms and located in parts of what is now Western Nigeria and neighbouring areas of the republic of Benin and Togo, the Igbo themselves say 'Igbo enwe eze', the Igbo have no kings. Yet the Igbo have developed a fairly elaborate cult of the Supreme Being with regular sacrifices whereas the Yoruba have not.

Yoruba traditions draw a parallel between God (Olodumare) as the Supreme heavenly ruler, and the king (Oba) as the supreme earthly ruler. One of the title-names of God is 'Olofin Orun', the Supreme sovereign ruler of heaven. Olodumare like the Oba directs the affairs of the universe not directly, but through a host of subordinate deities, 'Orisha.' Yoruba myths say that even the creation of the world was not effected, directly by Olodumare, rather, he created through the agency of the deities. After creation, Olodumare delegated the care of the world to the Orisha. Thereafter, he remained aloof from Yoruba History and their day to day affairs.

Yet paradoxically, the Yoruba believe that every detail of their lives is controlled by Olodumare. Offerings to the deities often conclude with the phrase. 'May Olodumare send blessings upon it'. In situations of sudden personal crisis when no other power is available, the Yoruba often appeal directly to Olodumare with such ejaculations as 'May Olodumare save me'.<sup>9</sup>

The position of Olodumare in Yoruba cosmology as both 'present' and 'remote' has great influence on their rituals. There are elaborate rituals for the Orisha (deities) who are the immediate controllers of the course of human life, and almost no rituals for Olodumare. There are no altars, priests, or festivals celebrated in honour of Olodumare in Yoruba traditions.<sup>10</sup>

Even though most Igbo communities were independent and had no kings, large sections of the northern Igbo came under the ritual influence of the 'Eze Nri' priest-kings of Nri. A creation myth of the Nri claims that *Eri*, the ancestor hero of the Nri clan, was sent down from heaven by the 'High God' Chukwu to reorganise the world. To accomplish his task which included providing different types of food for mankind, Eri had to sacrifice his son and daughter. In return God gave him the ritual sovereignty over his subjects.<sup>11</sup> Thus ritual is central to the Igbo cosmology. God is amenable to rituals. This I think is an important difference between Igbo and Yoruba world-views.

In other ways, however, Igbo world-view is similar to the Yoruba world-view described above. Between God and man, there are many intermediaries—*Mmuo*, Deities; *Arushi*, Spirit-forces; and *Ndichie*, Ancestors. These spiritual beings are immediately in control of daily life and morality.



However, God occasionally intervenes in human affairs. His close presence in Igbo life and psychology is borne out by the frequent ejaculations and invocations the Igbo make at different moments of their lives just like the Yoruba.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to these invocations, unlike the Yoruba, the Igbo have regular rituals and sacrifices to God. There are private altars for God in the homes of most Igbo title-holders, and public shrines in village squares called '*Onu Chukwu*', God's altar.<sup>13</sup> Rituals and sacrifices at both private and public shrines are made during the annual festivals of *Ime Onu Chukwu*, celebrating the altar of God, and at other times as directed by a diviner. The two commonest sacrifices to God are, the *Aja Eze Enu*, sacrifice to king of the Heavens, and *Iruma Chukwu*, pitching the Altar of God.<sup>14</sup> Each of these may have developed at different stages of Igbo cultural history in response to different socio-cultural changes in Igbo history as we shall see below.

#### CULT OF GOD IN THE CULTURAL HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The transcendence and immanence of God like other religious apprehensions and responses occur in history, and therefore factors which determine them must be sought in the culture histories of the societies in which they occur.

Aspects of Igbo cultural history which have come to light suggest that religious changes affecting the belief in and cult of the Supreme are linked with major innovations in the socio-cultural and economic life of the people.

This is also true of Yoruba but comes out less clearly in their culture history.

#### GOD IN IGBO CULTURE HISTORY

Professor Afigbo identified four distinct periods in the Igbo cultural history—*Pre-Eri* period, *Eri* period, the *Aro* era, and *modern* period. I adopt this periodisation, but would like to make a further distinction between the *early Eri* period and the *later Eri* (or *Nri*) period.<sup>15</sup>

The coming of Eri and the Nri priestly clan was an epoch making event in the Igbo cultural history. Recent anthropological researches by Professor Onwuejeogwu have established a link between the Nri priest-king institution and the amazing bronze art works unearthed at Igbo-Ukwu by Professor Thurstan Shaw, radiocarbon-dated to about the middle of the ninth century A.D. Analysis of the finds argues Professor Shaw, shows that communities around Igbo-Ukwu, at this period had attained a high degree of social sophistication, and evolved an economy based on the cultivation of yams, and long ranging trade.<sup>17</sup> If this is so, argues Professor Afigbo, the culture which produced the Igbo-ukwu bronzes must have taken a millennium and a half to attain that degree of sophistication and social wealth.<sup>18</sup> So that, at least a millennium separates the early Eri period, and the later Nri period.

The myth of the Nri priestly clan, tells of the social, technological and ritual



innovations introduced by the incoming priestly clan into the pre-Eri autochthonous Igbo cultures. According to Nri traditions before the coming of Eri the ancestor hero of the Nri priestly clan, 'mmadu n'awaghari n'ofia dika umu anumanu' men were wandering in the forest like animals. The pre-Eri Igbo communities were therefore probably nomadic hunters and fruit-gathers.<sup>19</sup> Their religion, if one were to follow Charles Long's analysis, would be the cult of the Supreme being. This appears to be borne out by the fact that the mythico-religious philosophy with which the Nri justified their ritual domination of the autochthonous Igbo already claimed that Eri was sent down from heaven by Chukwu (High God), who presumably the people already knew about. The nature of this cult of the Supreme Being in the Pre-Eri period is uncertain. However, it apparently involved a sacrifice. For, Eri himself had to offer a sacrifice to Chukwu to obtain the food-crops. This sacrifice is probably a prototype of *Aja-Eze-enu*. For whereas Chukwu remained central to the Nri cosmology, the new cults introduced later were fertility cults.

The innovations introduced during the Eri period were revolutionary. According to the myth, Eri introduced agriculture, especially the cultivation of yams and cocoyams which are still the main food crops of the Igbo. A group of artisans consisting of Awaka smiths, and Umudioka carvers had also sprung up to supply the farming community with better tools. The Nri clan served as ritual experts of this growing agricultural community. The same corpus of Nri traditions mentions that they soon introduced fertility cults to cope with the needs and aspirations of the agricultural community. They (the Nri) were the '*Isi Ana*' (priests of Earth-mother). Nri introduced *Ifejioku* (yam deity). Only they could establish and cleanse *Nso Ana* (taboos to the Earth-mother).

As society became more prosperous, internal and external trade developed. The Nri encouraged trade as seen in the claim that 'Eze Nri (Nri Priest-king) introduced the four Igbo market days, Eke, Orie, Afor, and Nkwo, which they again claimed to be spirit-forces, sent by Chukwu (High God).

Thus as Igbo communities moved from nomadic life to sedentary agricultural life, they adopted many fertility cults in addition to the belief and cult of the 'High God'. Consequently, Igbo cosmology became populated with many fertility deities, and Chukwu, God, became remote.

The Nri culture which was based on the manipulation of the fertility spirits and spirit-forces, adequately served the needs of sedentary agricultural population. When the Atlantic trade developed in West Africa in the 17th and 18th centuries, the Nri culture began to decline. For, writes Professor Afigbo:

'There was a more fundamental flaw in the culture which Nri manipulated to attain eminence. This was that it was based on a set and rigid cosmological concept which did not easily adjust to change . . . Nri rose on the manipulation of spirit forces and to the end sought to subject every thing to such manipulation'.



The Nri were supplanted by the Aro who were able to develop the ritual mechanism for coping with the macrocosm to which the society was exposed as a result of the transatlantic trade. It is most significant that they did this by developing a hitherto local oracle into the centre of the cult of the High God, 'Chukwu'.

The Aro are a community in southeastern frontier of Igboland made up of Igbo, Ibibio and Jukun settlers. They took advantage of the strategic position of their settlement to organise themselves into a syndicate of middle-men between the coastal tribes and the hinterland; where they exchanged manufactured European goods for slaves. To maintain their influence and authority in the important trading centres and communities where they had settlements, they raised a hitherto local deity 'Ibini Ukpabi' to the status of the Supreme Being (Chukwu). The Igbo and some other surrounding peoples soon accepted the Aro 'doctrine' that God himself lived and gave oracles at Arochukwu. Hence pilgrimage to the oracle was called 'Ije Chukwu', going to God, and the Aro people themselves were called 'UmuChukwu'; Children of God.

Some scholars see the Chukwu oracle merely as 'a brilliantly perpetuated confidence trick, by which the Aro enhanced their elite role as traders and slavers.'<sup>21</sup> There is no doubt that a lot of fraud was practised by the Aro who acted as agents of the oracle. However for the thousands of pilgrims who went there, the Aro Chukwu oracle was a deep spiritual phenomenon. Chukwu spoke there, and its cult was believed to be the cult of the Supreme Being. William Balfour Baikie in 1858 wrote the following about the fame, prestige and sense of awe the Arochukwu oracle inspired:

'Not far from this, stands the noted city of Aro or Ano, where is the celebrated shrine of Tshuku or the deity to which pilgrimages are made, not only from all parts of Igbo proper, but from old Calabar, from the tribes along the Coast, and from Oro and Nimbe or Brass. The town is always mentioned with great respect, almost at times with a degree of veneration, and the people say 'Tshuku ab yama' or God lives there'.<sup>22</sup>

The Chukwu oracle is consulted to disclose hidden things, to settle difficult disputes, to explain the cause and prescribe remedies for a series of undeserved misfortunes or simply to enquire about one's well being, or that of his family. On return from a pilgrimage, an Aro priest visits the home of the pilgrim, and sets up an altar for Chukwu 'Iruma Chukwu (pitching the altar of God) at which he offers sacrifice and prayers with his 'ebi' (praying rattle) for the pilgrim. Thereafter the pilgrim may himself pray and offer sacrifices to Chukwu on his altar any time he wants. The Aro theocracy thus illustrates how the 'Otiose' High God was brought into play to cope with rapid social changes which exposed people living in microcosmic rural communities to



the influences of the wider world. It required a military expedition in 1901 by the British colonial power to destroy the Aro Chukwu oracle and suppress the Aro influence.

The mass conversion of the Igbo to Christianity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries has received a lot of literary comment. Horton's own analysis sufficiently explains this phenomenon—they found Christianity a more appropriate means of coping with the experiences of the macrocosm to which their hitherto microcosmic communities had been exposed by the rapid social changes which came in the wake of colonialism.

### GOD IN YORUBA CULTURAL HISTORY

The data we have about the cultural history of the Yoruba seem to suggest that, unlike in Igbo culture, cult of the Supreme Being was never a prominent feature of Yoruba religion. For purposes of analysis, Yoruba Religio/Cultural history could be divided into the following periods—*Pre-Oduduwa Era*, *Oduduwa Era*, the *slave-Trade Era*, *Islamic Era*, and *modern Era*.

The little information we have about Yoruba religion during the Pre-Oduduwa era, derives from a legend which claims that the Yoruba migrated from some where north of their present homeland. Two different accounts of this migration agree on one point—that the worship of the Orisha (deities) was at the very basis of Yoruba culture even in the Pre-Oduduwa era.

The account given by Samuel Johnson, claimed that Oduduwa was a crown-prince of Mecca who relapsed into paganism and was forced to flee to Ife with his followers. Thereafter, 'Oduduwa and his sons swore a mortal hatred of the Moslems of their country'.<sup>23</sup> Another version given by Ulli Beier, simply says that the migration was from somewhere north of the Niger. This migration is also linked with the culture-hero Oduduwa with whom is associated the names of some of the major Yoruba Orishas like Obalufon, Ogiya Ogun, Oranmiyan, all of whom are described as warriors and founders of cities. Such that, Ulli Beier is of the view that 'The whole conception of Orisa worship, and the philosophy and culture connected with it, seems in fact to have been brought by the invaders'.<sup>24</sup> Yoruba culture history therefore appears to suggest that the core of the Yoruba society in the Pre-Oduduwa era, were city dwellers under warrior chiefs. Orisha worship had already developed, and was retained as the state religion.

The Oduduwa era covers the period of the Yoruba occupation and settlement in the present Yoruba country. Two Yoruba myths try to recapture the major events of this period. A creation myth says that God first assigned the task of creation to Obatala, the hero god of the autochthonous inhabitants of Yorubaland called the Igbo (not to be confused with the present Igbo people of Nigeria also discussed here). He later assigned the same task to Oduduwa, the hero deity of the Yoruba, when Obatala was unable to accomplish the task.



After creating the world, Oduduwa established the institution of the Kingship at Ile-Ife, and his sixteen sons founded the sixteen kingdoms which make up the Yoruba nation.<sup>25</sup>

The second myth relates how sometime in the 16th century, Obatala and his people the Igbo, became jealous of the successes of Oduduwa and his people and attacked them. Obatala and his people were defeated and exiled. He later reconciled with Oduduwa and returned to become the third King of Ife. Today, the Igbo have been integrated into the Yoruba race. The priests of Obatala still retain the privilege of crowning the Kings of Ife, in recognition of their rights as the original inhabitants of the land.<sup>26</sup> What we witness here is probably the amalgamation of two peoples as well as two world-views resulting in a more populous pantheon and a further withdrawal of the Supreme Being.

The slave-trade did not initiate the interactions between different groups and communities in Western Nigeria which had been going on through trade, migrations and wars between the different kingdoms. It merely intensified them. The war-like traditions of the Yoruba were put to a new use—providing large numbers of slaves for the markets in the America. Unsettled life in Yorubaland was not favourable for the development of traditional religion. However colonies of Yoruba and Fon slaves in the new world have preserved a syncretised form of Yoruba and Fon religion. The interesting aspect of this development, is that the aspects of Yoruba religion which were retained and developed were the belief and cult of the Orisha (deities) not the belief in the Supreme Being, as one might be led by Horton's explanation to expect. Rather the Orisha are syncretised with biblical or Catholic Saints. Even, according to Erika Bourguignon:

'It is the African character of the spirits that predominates in ritual and that in almost all instances the saint provides merely a name'<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, contacts and conflicts with Muslims from areas to the North of Yorubaland which apparently had been going on all the time, and in fact was one of the causes of the Yoruba migration, intensified by the 18th and 19th centuries. By the mid-19th century, Hausa and Fulani Muslim Clerics, traders and slaves had made enough Yoruba converts to overrun the Oyo empire. These contacts left a noticeable imprint on Yoruba religion and culture. Yet the vehemence with which the Yoruba traditionalists resisted Islam and the Muslim invaders are captured in this observation of Clapperton:

'the Yoruba confirmed Kaffers (pagans) on the invasion of the Fellatahs . . . put all the Mahometans to death whether natives or in Caravans traffic-king; quite denying the plea that God had given to the faithful their land and houses and their wives and children to be slaves'.<sup>28</sup>



The history of Yoruba traditional religion in the colonial and post-colonial era is no different from that of Igbo religion- mass conversion to Islam and Christianity. What is most striking is that despite the long history of resistance of Yoruba traditional religion to Islam, this resistance appear to have collapsed during the colonial era, for Islam recorded one of its fastest growth in Africa among the Yoruba during this period.<sup>29</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Explanations of the paradox of the transcendence and immanence of God given by Charles Long and Robin Horton have clarified some aspects of this problem, but have raised other problems. There is a sense in which the two explanations are complimentary. Long's explanation has highlighted the historical dimension of the problem which involves the process of religious change. While Horton's explanation clarified the philosophical principles underlying this process of religious change.

Most writers, I think would accept that Horton's hypothesis if validated provides a satisfactory philosophico-theoretical frame for explaining the cause of the 'withdrawal' or immanence of God in any society. On the other hand, his hypothesis is so linked with the situation of rapid social changes and the spread of Christianity and Islam in the 19th and 20th centuries that critics have rightly pointed out that it would require more validation from the pre-modern and pre-Islamic/Christian African religious history before it could be definitely established. Horton tried to supply this deficiency in a rejoinder to Humphrey Fisher's article. He cited a number of instances in the pre-modern histories of different African societies where the 'High God' was brought into play to cope with social changes which exposed the community to the macrocosm.<sup>31</sup>

This article has provided further validation for Horton's explanation, but has also exposed some of its shortcomings. The cross-cultural comparative study of the phenomenon of the immanence of God in Yoruba and Igbo religions, has I think, examined the viability of his theory in a cross-cultural historical perspective. Explanation of the relatively more cult of the 'High God' in Igbo religion, than in Yoruba religion is found in their different religious-cultural histories.

Igbo religio-culture history shows that although the Supreme Being has always been an important factor in Igbo cosmology, major developments in his cult came at points in Igbo history when, and in communities which were most exposed to the influences of the macrocosm. The proto-type of *Aja eze enu* (sacrifice to king of the sky) was probably developed during nomadic pre-Eri period. This cult survived the revolutionary Eri period when settled agricultural life, meant the introduction of different fertility cults. However, the fertility cults greatly compromised the cult of the High God. The cult of God



among the Igbo attained its highest development among the Aro who acted as the link between the tribes of southern Nigeria and the outside world during the period of the transatlantic trade between the 17th and 19th centuries. They introduced another type of sacrifice to God—'*Iruma Chukwu*' (pitching the altar of God) and organised worshipping groups for the God-cult made up of past-pilgrims to the Chukwu oracle. However, since the Igbo society remained a sedentary agricultural community, the cult of the fertility gods remained the principal feature of Igbo traditional religion until the modern Christian era.

The much we know of Yoruba culture history, reveals that Yoruba communities of the pre-Oduduwa times were already an urban dwelling, centrally organised society, probably composed of agriculturists and artisans. Their religion had already then taken a definite shape—Orisha worship, which was already in conflict with Islam—a universalist and monotheistic religion. Orisha worship was therefore at the basis of Yoruba culture and nationalism. So the Yoruba remained attached to Orisha cults not only because of their socio-economic circumstances but also because of politico-nationalistic feelings. The history of the Yoruba was one of a long and bitter conflict with Islam. Orisha cult provided a focus of Yoruba unity of purpose—their opposition to Muslim aggression. In other words, religious beliefs may have other functions than that of 'explanation, prediction and control' of space-time events. The same explanation could be offered for the survival of some Yoruba cults in the New World—it was a symbol of resistance and protest against slavery and slave conditions. This opinion seems to be confirmed by the major role said to have been played by voodooism in the struggle for the independence of Haiti.

Thus factors which predetermine the transcendence and immanence of God are many and vary according to the historical experiences of each society. They could be socio-economic, cultural, or political changes. Whichever they are, where such changes result in the substantial exposure of the community to macrocosmic or microcosmic experiences, they precipitate a process of rationalisation which tend to result in more ritual attention to the Supreme Being or his 'withdrawal' from human affairs, as the case may be. However, Yoruba cultural history shows that a mere physical exposure to the macrocosm is not enough to generate the process of rationalisation. Exposure to the macrocosm does not *ipso facto* result in a macroscopic view. Horton's explanation does not make this point clear. Physical exposure to the macrocosm must be accompanied by some degree of psychological receptivity to change, for other factors may be at work which may build up a psychological resistance to change. This explains why sometimes when 'the microcosm really begins to go to pieces, and the macrocosm to thrust itself upon us, we may more easily find the strengthening of witch-finding (and spirit-possession) . . . rather than enhanced respect for the creator'.<sup>32</sup>



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# ORAL TORAH IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

## ASPECTS OF MISHNAH-EXEGESIS IN THE PALESTINIAN TALMUD

**Martin S. Jaffee**

### EXEGESIS AND AUTHORITY

In a recent essay,<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith coins the term 'exegetical totalization' to describe the complex of strategies by which religious cultures, literate and nonliterate, come to terms with canonical authority. The precondition of exegetical totalization, Smith observes, is a collection of texts. These may be conceived narrowly as linguistic constructions (written scriptures or oral traditions) or broadly as any collection of objects construed as meaningful signs (icons or even found objects). Exegetical totalization emerges when such texts constitute for a given culture a closed system of uniquely authoritative utterances or symbols to which nothing else may be added, and from which nothing may be subtracted. 'Where there is a canon', Smith argues, 'it is possible to predict the *necessary* occurrence of a hermeneute, of an interpreter whose task it is continually to extend the domain of the closed canon over everything that exists *without* altering the canon in the process. It is with the canon and its hermeneute that we encounter the necessary obsession with exegetical totalization.'<sup>2</sup>

Central to Smith's model of canon and exegesis is the observation that canonical exegesis proceeds within an unavoidable dialectic of constraint and ingenuity. The constraint imposed by the canon is the simple fact of its existence—that just *this* set of texts is conventionally conceded to constitute an organizing medium for commerce with whatever is regarded as sacred. This very constraint is what generates the exegetical ingenuity distinctive to exegetical totalization. The restrictive character of the canon gives birth to the hermeneutical labor by which the resistance of the canon to novelty is overcome and the new wine of interpretation, so to speak, is poured into the old bottles of unchanging texts. The value of Smith's focus on this dialectic is that it permits historians of religions to enrich those theological and historicistic conceptions of exegesis which focus almost exclusively on the explicative function of exegetical activity.



Certainly the exegesis of canonical scriptures in Judaism, Christianity and Islam is *at least* an effort to clarify and explicate the revelation of God to His people. But historians of religion have now at their disposal a workable model for tracing other less obvious functions of exegesis in religious traditions; functions which are usually ignored when exegesis is taken at face value as an effort, in good faith, to discover the meaning of revealed knowledge. Smith requires us to recognize that the exegesis of canonical utterance is also a transformation of that utterance. Exegesis alters the text's conventional web of significations without admitting that novelty has been introduced into the sacred system.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the refusal of the exegete to acknowledge sources of knowledge beyond the textual confines of the canon is at the same time a legitimization of those exegetical manipulations of the text which enable the canonical utterance to address the specific situations of those who perceive it as sacred. Exegesis, therefore, is not only a science of explication, but an agent of religious transformation. Through it, new social, institutional and intellectual constructions are made to appear as self-evident exemplifications of the values and norms stemming from the canon. Novelty is made to appear as if it were encompassed by the timeless order of truth encoded in the canon, and so is identified with that order.

It is just at this turn of his argument that Smith's discussion of canonical exegesis requires amplification. Perhaps because the primary examples in his essay are drawn from divining practices in nonliterate cultures, he appears to have under-emphasized a critical element in the textual exegete's conception of what he or she is about. That is, when textual exegetes extend the meanings of their texts to encompass all that can be thought or believed, they routinely deny that they are engaged in any particularly 'creative' activity. The meanings read in to the text, by explicit or implicit strategies of misreading, are understood as having always been there. Exegesis, for the hermeneute, is not the *discovery* of the gifted interpreter, but a simple *recovery*—with God's help—of meanings eternally present. At least in literate cultures, therefore, the exegetical totalization of the canon depends for its persuasiveness upon a certain pretext of passivity, an interpretation of innovation which conceals itself from both the exegete and the audience.<sup>4</sup>

By attending to this pretext of passivity, this 'false consciousness'<sup>5</sup> by which the creator of meaning denies participation in its production, I hope to contribute to the discussion of canonical exegesis along the lines mapped out by Smith. In particular, I wish to bring Smith's model into correlation with the data supplied by Rabbinic Judaism. The bulk of this essay, therefore, explores the dialectic of canonical constraint and exegetical ingenuity in what are commonly regarded as the most sober examples of 'close-reading' in the entire Rabbinic corpus, i.e. the Talmud's exegetical discussions of the Mishnah. The Mishnah, an early 3rd century compilation of rules and legal discussions, is in



fact the canonical text taken up for discussion in *two* Talmuds, that of Palestine and that of Babylonia. Here I focus on Mischnaic exegesis in the Palestinian Talmud (hereafter, 'Yerushalmi'), a late 4th century commentary which, because it anticipates in form and content much of what comes to classical expression in the later Babylonian product, can be regarded as a kind of model of early Rabbinic legal exegesis.<sup>6</sup>

The discussion will unfold in three stages. First, by way of setting the context of the Yerushalmi's exegetical work, I point to the conception of the Jewish canon presupposed by the Talmud's editors. This conception is expressed in the Rabbinic myth of Oral Torah, which holds that Moses received on Sinai not merely the revelation recorded in writing in the Hebrew Bible (the Written Torah), but also a second Torah, an Oral Torah. This Oral Torah constitutes the authoritative application of the Written Torah's commandments to the life of Israel. For the Yerushalmi, the collected teachings of the Mishnah's Sages (the Tannaim, 'Repeaters [of the Mishnah]') are the authentic corpus of this Oral Torah. Tannaitic sayings, recorded in the Mishnah and cognate texts (see note 22), are taught by word of mouth from master to disciple, memorized and repeated, so that the Rabbinic community itself becomes the earthly locus for the continuing presence of revelation in Israel. This notion of Oral Torah adumbrates the theory of canonical exegesis which guides the work of the Yerushalmi's editors on the Mishnah.

Identification of this theory introduces the second step of the work, which is a description of the way in which the editors of the Yerushalmi routinely present the canonical text of the Mishnah to their readers and prepare it for the process of exegetical totalization. Of greatest interest here is the Yerushalmi's atomization of the Mishnah into nearly unintelligible literary fragments. As I shall argue, this sets the stage for the Talmud's effort to portray the Mishnah as a single element of a larger canonical tradition extending from Moses, down through the Mishnah, and into the very generation of those who compose the Talmud itself. I trace this effort in the third portion of this essay, which explores in detail a typical example of the Yerushalmi's exegetical strategy. Fully displayed here are the procedures by which the Yerushalmi's commentary expresses—in its literary construction and intellectual procedures—the myth of Oral Torah which legitimates the current Rabbinic community as the authoritative bearer of Revelation. Here I argue that the Talmud's intertwining of its own pericopae with those of the Mishnah serves not merely to *explain* the Mishnah, but also—and most importantly—to ensure that the texts which interpret Oral Torah do themselves *become* part of that same Oral Torah. This suggests, in conclusion, that when we speak of exegesis in early Rabbinic Judaism, we speak of more than an effort to extend the canon over all of life. We speak as well of an effort to extend the authority and charisma of revelation to those who take upon themselves the task of permitting revelation to be heard.



## THE ORAL TORAH IN EARLY RABBINISM

It is unlikely that historians of Judaism will ever isolate the precise moment at which Jews began to speak of an 'Oral Torah' which stands in a complementary relation to a 'Written Torah', both of them the very word of God to Moses on Sinai.<sup>7</sup> Nor, for that matter, given the selective and fragmentary character of the Rabbinic historical memory,<sup>8</sup> are we likely to trace the process by which a specific text, the Mishnah of Judah the Patriarch (c. 135–220 C.E.), came to be advertised as the most ample single witness to the content and method of Oral Torah.<sup>9</sup>

The Mishnah itself is silent on the matter. While it does, in three places, claim that some of its Sages have traditions stemming from Moses (Mishnah Peah 2 : 6, Mishnah Eduyot 8 : 7, Mishnah Yadaim 4 : 3), the term 'Oral Torah' (*torah sheb'al peh*)<sup>10</sup> does not appear in the Mishnah's vocabulary. Even tractate Aboth ('Sayings of the Fathers'), a 3rd century apologetic on behalf of the Mishnah,<sup>11</sup> implies only that the Mishnaic *authorities* stand in a line of discipleship extending back to Moses (cf. M. Aboth 1 : 1–2 : 4): 'Moses received Torah from Sinai and passed it on to Joshua, and Joshua passed it on to the Elders', and so on and so on until the earliest ancestors of the Rabbis 'received it from them'. There is no mention here of Oral Torah, and no claim that the Mishnah is itself such an Oral Torah.<sup>12</sup>

When, however, we move a century or two beyond Mishnah Aboth, there is clear evidence that the Mishnah's status as a complement to Scripture is well on its way to becoming a *fait accompli*. Two sorts of evidence lead to this conclusion. The first is the simple fact that in texts of biblical exegesis ('midrash') compiled in Palestine by the late 4th century there are scattered passages which indeed refer to or presuppose the notion of two Torahs, with the implication that the Mishnah is the 'Oral Torah', related in some organic sense to the 'Written Torah' of Scripture.<sup>13</sup> A second, and to my mind more compelling type of evidence for the canonization of the Mishnah, is the Talmud Yerushalmi itself. This text brings to the Mishnah a program of sustained exegesis such as, in 4th century Jewish Palestine, is mounted for no other book save Scripture alone. We know, therefore, that for the Yerushalmi the Mishnah is Torah simply because it treats the Mishnah in the way that other Rabbinic works of similar time and place treat Scripture—as a text requiring and repaying the closest possible scrutiny.

By far the larger part of the present essay is devoted to the analysis of this second body of evidence. Nevertheless, preliminary and selective discussion of the first type of evidence will be helpful. Perhaps one of the earliest references to the idea of Oral Torah is found in Sifra, a commentary on Leviticus compiled in Palestine during the same period in which the Yerushalmi was taking final shape.<sup>14</sup> While Sifra presents itself as a record of the Scriptural exegeses taught in the schools of the Mishnaic Sages themselves, the entire



document presupposes the existence of the Mishnah in pretty much its present form. As Neusner has shown,<sup>15</sup> the problem of greatest interest to the compilers of Sifra is that the Mishnah only rarely provides the Scriptural foundations upon which its complex body of law rests. Sifra's concern, accordingly, is to demonstrate that the Mishnah's laws are *not*, as appears to be the case, the product of independent Rabbinic ratiocination, but rather constitute a series of deductions from Scriptural verses. These are supplied in Sifra itself, which systematically relates the text of Leviticus to appropriate passages of Mishnaic law. Sifra, that is, lets the reader 'see' just how the Mishnah's Sages came to the conclusions recorded independently of Scripture in the Mishnah.

It is in Sifra's comments on Lv. 26 : 46 (*Behuqotai*, Ch. 8, paragraph 12), that we find the following remarkable exegesis:

- A. [Scripture states:] "These are the statutes, the ordinances and the Torahs [which the Lord made between Him and the children of Israel on Mt. Sinai, by the hand of Moses]".
- B. "The statutes"—these are the [legal] exegeses [of Scripture].
- C. "The ordinances"—these are the rulings [promulgated by Israel's Sages].
- D. "The Torahs"—this teaches that two Torahs were given to Israel, one in writing and one by word of mouth.
- E. Said R. Aqiba (d. ca. 135): "And did Israel have only two Torahs? Indeed, were not then many Torahs given to Israel? [For example:] 'This is the Torah of the whole offering' (Lv. 6 : 2), 'This is the Torah of the meal offering' (Lv. 6 : 7), 'This is the Torah of the guilt offering' (Lv. 7 : 1), 'This is the Torah of the peace offering' (Lv. 7 : 11), 'This is the Torah when a man dies in a tent' (Nu. 19 : 14)."
- F. "Which the Lord made between Him and the children of Israel"—[this teaches that] Moses was worthy to be made a messenger between Israel and their Father in Heaven.
- G. "On Mt. Sinai, by the hand of Moses"—this teaches that the Torah was given with all of its applications, specifications and interpretations by the hand of Moses on Mt. Sinai.

The pericope is a simple string of glosses on the clauses of the Scriptural passage cited at stich A. The formal simplicity, however, serves a remarkable claim about the nature of Torah, a claim far more ambitious than anything found in Mishnah Aboth. The important points for our purposes are made at B-D+E and G. Sifra's comments on the apparent redundancies of Lv. 26 : 46 (B-D), are formally of a piece. In terms of content, however, D seems to be quite independent of B-C, and fully justifies Aqiba's dissenting gloss at E. B-C has only told us that Scripture's redundancy permits the inference that the revelation to Moses consisted not only of the Torah, but of authoritative interpretations and amplifications of it. Customary applications of the Torah, that is, are regarded as part of its law.<sup>16</sup> With D we encounter a radically



different point of view. That is, Scripture's use of the plural noun, 'torot', instead of the singular, 'torah', indicates that the Mosaic revelation constituted *two Torahs, one written and one oral*. The leap from 'torot' to *two Torahs* is hardly demanded by the context of Lv. 26 : 46, and the details of their 'written' and 'oral' character certainly have no basis in the present verse. It seems, then, that the verse is used to legitimate a notion already current in at least one (unidentified) Rabbinic school. At any rate, Aqiba's *reductio ad absurdum* (E) is a brilliant retort. Indeed, it appears to be accepted by the editor of this pericope, who gives Aqiba the final word. The final stich of the pericope (G), which picks up the thread of the argument, simply restates the thesis of B-C, ignoring D as if Aqiba had adequately demolished it.

This brief passage yields some important information. First, it indicates that by the time of Sifra's redaction it was possible, in some Rabbinic circles, to suggest that an Oral Torah of Mosaic origin was part of the sacred heritage of Israel. Second, it appears that the editors of Sifra, though aware of the idea, are uncomfortable with it. Within the context of the present pericope, this discomfort is reflected by the marshalling of Aqiban authority to point out the arbitrariness of the exegesis believed to justify the independence of the Oral Torah. On the documentary level of Sifra as a whole, discomfort with the notion of Oral Torah as a body of revealed knowledge supplementing Scripture, is reflected in the editors' preoccupation with proving that the Mishnah's laws are entirely dependent upon those of Scripture. So we have in Sifra a demonstration that the Mishnah is ancillary to Scripture in authority, and a dismissal of the idea that two Torahs were given to Israel. Thus, it is likely that Sifra's editors stand behind the views of B-C, E and G while rejecting D. The Mishnah, as Mishnah Aboth seems to claim, *is* authentic tradition—else, why pay attention to linking its laws to Scripture? But it is decidedly *not* 'Oral Torah', despite what the anonymous opponents of Aqiba might argue.

Who might such opponents be? Here I hazard a guess, in support of which there is some suggestive evidence. If, as seems likely, the redaction of Sifra is contemporaneous with the Talmud Yerushalmi, *the theory of Oral Torah rejected in Sifra represents the views of the authorities responsible for the Yerushalmi*. That is, the straw men demolished so brilliantly by Aqiba in Sifra represent, from the perspective of Sifra's editors, their contemporaries hard at work on the compilation of a commentary on the Mishnah, a commentary which treats the Mishnah as a text worthy of detailed exegesis in its own right. A particularly illuminating passage, which occurs with minor changes in three separate tractates of the Yerushalmi, reflects a polemical background familiar from Sifra, but pursues a markedly different thesis.<sup>17</sup> Before us is the text as it appears in Y. Peah 2 : 6, 17a (cf. Y. Megillah 4 : 1, 74d and Y. Hagigah 1 : 7, 76d):



- A. [Said] R. Zeira in the name of R. Eleazar: "[Scripture says:] 'Were I to write for him the greater portion (*rubby*) of my Torah [it would be regarded as a strange thing]' (Hos. 8 : 12). And, indeed, is the greater portion (*rubh*) of the Torah written down? Rather, [the point is that] matters derived from the exegesis of what is written [in Scripture] exceed in quantity (*mrubbyn*) those matters derived from the exegesis of what is [transmitted] by mouth [alone]."
- B. And is this so? Rather, [the meaning is] as follows: Matters derived from the exegesis of what is [transmitted] by mouth are of greater value than those matters derived from the exegesis of what is written [in Scripture].
- C. R. Judah b. Pazzi says [of the same verse]: "'Were I to write for him the greater portion of my Torah'—these are words of chastisement. Even so, would they not 'be regarded as a strange thing'?"
- D. Said R. Abin [of the same verse]: "'Were I to write for him the greater portion of my Torah', would they not 'be regarded as a strange thing'? [The meaning is as follows:] What distinguishes us from the Gentile nations? These [i.e., the Gentiles] publish books and those [i.e., Israel] publish books, these publish their national records and those publish their national records! [Thus the possession of Scripture alone does not constitute the uniqueness of Israel: cf. *Pesikta Rabbati*, ed. Friedman, 14b.]
- E. [Said] R. Haggai in the name of R. Samuel b. Nahman: "Some matters were stated by mouth and other matters were stated in writing, yet we would not know which of these is of greater value were it not for that which is written [in Scripture]: 'But in accordance with (*lpy*) these words have I made a covenant with you and Israel' (Ex. 34:27). This suggests that those matters stated by mouth (*sbph*) are of greater value."
- F. R. Yohanan and R. Yudan b. R. Simeon [both stated their opinions]—The former said: "If you have kept that which is [transmitted] by mouth [alone] and that which is [preserved] in writing, I will make a covenant with you. But if not, I will not make a covenant with you."
- G. And the latter said, "If you have kept that which is [transmitted] by mouth [alone] and have fulfilled that which is [preserved] in writing, you will receive a reward. But if not, you will not receive a reward."
- H. R. Joshua b. Levi said [of the following verse: "And on them was written according to all the words which the Lord spoke with you on the mount" (Dt. 9:10)]: "[Instead of the words] 'on them', [we find] 'and on them'. [Instead of] 'all', [we find] 'according to all'. [Instead of] 'words', [we find] 'the words'. [This persistent inclusionary language suggests that our studies of] Scripture, the Mishnah, legal dialectic (*ilmwd*) and lore—indeed, even what a seasoned disciple will in the future recite before his Master—all of this was already stated to Moses on Sinai."
- I. What is the [Scriptural] basis for this? "Is there anything of which it can be said, See this is new?" (Qoh. 1:10). His fellow will answer him and say, "It has been since eternity" (Qoh. 1:10).
- J. [Said] R. Zeira in the name of Samuel: "One should not construct inferences either from legal rulings [of the Mishnah], or from lore, or from supplementary rulings [in the names of the Sages of the Mishnah], but only on the basis of legal dialectic (*ilmwd*) [as practiced in the House of Study]."

The editor of this unit has brought together a series of pre-formed pericopae (A–D, E, F–G, H–I and J) which, because each is quite intelligible on its



own terms, appear to have been formulated independently of each other. Nevertheless, the whole is skillfully composed into a coherent, if somewhat artificial 'discussion' of the idea of Oral Torah. The critical observation for us is that each unit relevant to the problem of Oral Torah (A-B, E-I) assumes and accepts precisely what the editors of Sifra have rejected—that there are in fact two categories of sacred authority, one preserved in writing and one transmitted orally. The only problem of interest to the present authorities is the relative hierarchy in which the two sources of revelation are to be placed. For A-B and E, one must dominate the other, while for F-G the two enjoy equal standing.

The decisive position is taken at H, which disputes the position of B. Dt. 9:10 is carefully parsed to demonstrate that the entire system of contemporary Rabbinic learning—more comprehensive in scope than Scripture and the Mishnah combined—is itself considered to have been revealed in its basic outlines at Sinai. The Torah of the Rabbi, that is, is not his own invention. Rather, it is simply a recovery of what was once known to Moses but presumably lost in the course of later generations.<sup>18</sup> It has been, that is, 'since eternity' (I). H's view is confirmed at J. The only legitimate source for legal inferences are *not* the texts as preserved in Written or Oral Torah, but rather the give and take of argument as it proceeds within the holy confines of the Rabbinic academy, the contemporary replication of Sinai. To conclude, then, at every decisive turn of argument (B, H and J), our passage insists not only that there are two bodies of revelation, one in writing and one in oral form, but that for purposes of constructing normative rules for governing the community, the *oral* corpus is to be regarded as the definitive source.

The evidence thus far justifies the claim that the editors of the preceding discussion regard the Mishnah as *at least* a parallel revelation to Scripture. But what of the ultimate redactors of the Yerushalmi as a whole? Can the burden of our argument rest on this thrice-cited pericope and a few similar discussions elsewhere in the Yerushalmi? It need not and does not. The foregoing simply provides the context for interpreting a rather different and, I shall argue, more persuasive class of evidence. In what follows, we shall follow up Joshua b. Levi's suggestion, at Y. Peah 2:6H, that the Oral Torah is not *confined* to the Mishnah, but in fact comes to expression through the mouths of living disciples of the Sages. For evidence of the gravity with which the editors of the Yerushalmi as a whole take Joshua's statement, we need look no further than this Talmud's method of interpreting Mishnah. In this method the procedures by which the canonical authority of the Mishnah, as Oral Torah, is extended into the entire body of Rabbinic tradition is vividly displayed each time a Mishnaic ruling is subjected to comment. To this evidence, we now turn.

#### ATOMIZATION OF THE MISHNAH

The discussion to follow is based upon my study of a single, rather typical,



tractate of the Talmud Yerushalmi, Tractate Maaserot ('Tithes').<sup>19</sup> A commentary on the Mishnaic tractate of the same name, Yerushalmi Maaserot (hereafter, Y) is an extensive discussion of Mishnah Maaserot's tithing laws. It addresses, in rather slavish submission to the Mishnah's own agenda, the following issues: (1) definitions of types of produce subject to Scripture's various commandments to remove priestly gifts and other offerings from crops harvested in the Land of Israel; (2) the point in the ripening and/or harvest of produce at which its tithes and priestly gifts must be separated for the use of their rightful recipients (i.e. priests, Levites, the poor and, in certain years, the farmer himself on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem); (3) various restrictions regarding the consumption of untithed produce by its grower, purchaser and their dependents. Insofar as Y raises issues extraneous to those of the Mishnah, it invariably attempts to demonstrate that its own concerns are implied in the Mishnaic passage upon which it comments. As I shall argue, however, Y's apparent submission to Mishnah Maaserot regarding the facts of law and theme obscures a fundamental strategy of interpretation which permits the Talmud's editors to acquire for their own exegeses a status comparable—if not entirely equal to—that of the Mishnah itself.

In order to properly describe and trace this strategy, it is necessary to begin with a general account of the literary traits of Y's commentary on Mishnah Maaserot. Most simply, Y is a running commentary on the Mishnah, providing for most Mishnaic pericopae a series of from two to eight units of exegetical discourse (*sugyot*; singular, *sugya*). While printed editions of the Yerushalmi organize these *sugyot* under the Mishnaic pericope to which they belong, and while most manuscripts at least provide *Leitwörter* to indicate which part of the Mishnaic text is under discussion, this does not appear to have been the original method of the Talmud. Rather Y's *sugyot* are originally simply strung together, one after the other, with no key to their relations to particular Mishnaic rulings other than the fact that, frequently enough, the relevant Mishnaic passage may be cited in the course of discussion.<sup>20</sup> Further, these *sugyot* themselves commonly have no intrinsic connection to those which precede or follow them, and, at least in Y, are in large measure not originally formulated to comment on the Mishnaic ruling to which they are now appended.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the reader of Y is required not only to discover *which* Mishnaic passages are being discussed in a given *sugya*, but also must explain how some *sugyot* constitute a comment on the Mishnah at all.

The effect of this form of literary construction is, of course, to make the commentary as much of a challenge as the text upon which it comments. To this point I will return in great detail. For now it is sufficient to observe that Y's presentation of the Mishnah, as isolated citations in the context of a flowing argument, prevent the reader from construing the Mishnah as a text with its own independent literary and conceptual integrity. Rather, the Mishnaic text



is dismembered—atomized—into discrete propositions which reach Y's reader only through the filter of the commentary's supplementary discourse. Such meaning as the Mishnah now conveys is construed only when its isolated utterances are merged with the quite independent text of Y's commentary. In this way, the commentary supplants the Mishnah by incorporating it into a new text, that of the commentary itself. In this new text the Mishnah now participates only as one voice among many in defining the concrete content of the law of tithes. The Mishnah's own carefully crafted discussions, often extending to many paragraphs of sustained theoretical exploration, must now be interpreted as a series of isolated dicta, organized under the rubric of tithing law, but linked necessarily to the exemplary models of interpretation supplied by Y's framing discussions.

This refraction of Mishnah Maaserot's text functions in a dual way which should not be overlooked. First, it *preserves* and *celebrates* the canonical status of the Mishnah by subjecting its rulings and principles to extensive and intensive scrutiny. Second, it *transforms* the Mishnah from a self-contained text in its own right into a series of departure points for the construction of the Talmud's own text. The result is a work of kaleidoscopic character which presents canonical Mishnaic utterances in constant interaction with the exegetical discourse of the Yerushalmi's authorities. Fragments of the Mishnah, deprived even of the elementary context supplied by their original location within a given tractate, now enjoy a relation to each other only insofar as Y itself, for its own purposes, chooses to bring them into correlation.

Yerushalmi Maaserot's commentary, in this view, is a thoroughly dialogical literary creation—a text which quite literally 'speaks through' the more prestigious text of the Mishnah. The statements of 3rd and 4th century Rabbis recorded in the commentary claim a hearing not on their own merits, but rather on those of the text in reference to which their statements are to be correlated. That is, we would not be studying *their* words but for their proximity to the words of the Tannaim. What happens, of course, is that by speaking 'through' the Mishnah, which remains for the most part uncited, the Talmud's Masters also begin to speak *for* it. The editors of the commentary take control of the canonical text through the very means of ascribing authority to it—through the means of interpretation. The result is to link the Mishnah and its commentary into a seamless conversation in which the distinction between Torah and commentary, Mishnah and exegesis, loses significance. Yerushalmi Maaserot is perceived as an inevitable and, indeed, indispensable element in the articulation of the Mishnah. Mishnah Maaserot, deprived by its interpreters of the power to mount its own discourse, becomes inseparable from their commentary, and speaks through it alone.



### THE REINTEGRATION OF THE MISHNAH

It is, of course, beyond doubt that the intentions of Y's editors are not to ignore the Mishnah, but rather to achieve what they regard as its primary purpose as Oral Torah—to construct, in an age of Exile, an Israelite society modeled after the will of Heaven. This explains why, despite this Talmud's literary atomization of the Mishnah, its concrete interests are overwhelmingly centered upon the application and extension of rulings and principles explored in Mishnah Maaserot. Nearly 90% of all pericopae found in Y, after all, are devoted to this concern, clear evidence that the exegetical totalization of the Mishnah is the Yerushalmi's primary interest.

Its atomistic approach to the Mishnah is not a contrivance designed to destroy the text, but rather an indication that, for the Yerushalmi, the 'text' of any given tractate is not constituted solely by what falls between its first and last words. To put matters differently, a tractate is not regarded as a coherent literary composition conveying within its own limits a unified statement of meaning. Rather, the true text of which any Mishnaic utterance is a part is the entire deposit of Oral Torah—the Mishnah as a whole, and all those extra-Mishnaic rulings and principles reported in the names of the Mishnah's Sages.<sup>22</sup> The Oral Torah, in this view, is *not* a collection of documents, but rather a thesaurus of *sentences*, any and all of which are in principle available for application to a specific conceptual puzzle. Thus, it is necessary, in the Yerushalmi's view, to weave the rulings of one Mishnaic tractate with those of others, as well as with extra-Mishnaic traditions of the Tannaim into new patterns of meaning which may transcend the concrete perview of any given tractate. As I have observed already, however, this very elevation of the words of the Mishnaic Sages to the status of Oral Torah, and the apparent submission to their words and legal philosophy, is precisely the means by which Y's editors complete their ultimate domination of the Mishnah, and begin to acquire for their own exegetical work the status belonging to the Torah of the Sages. In order to appreciate the nature of this domination, it is necessary to refine the previous generalizations by means of a careful study of a representative sample of Y's exegetical materials.

Before us, is Y's entire contribution to Mishnah Maaserot, ch. three, paragraph eight (M 3:8). The passage is ideal for our purposes since the laws of the Mishnah itself are relatively straightforward, the Talmud's discussion is not overly complex, and the three *sugyot* appended to the Mishnah are rather brief.<sup>23</sup> These traits will enable us to focus on the *method* of the Talmud without having to move too deeply into the technicalities of its discourse.

A few introductory explanations of what is to follow will be of some use to readers unfamiliar with the Mishnaic laws of tithing. Mishnah Maaserot 3:8 is part of a larger Mishnaic unit, M 3:5–10, which is concerned in particular with regulating the consumption of untithed produce in the courtyard of the



owner's home. Some basic assumptions underline this apparently arcane problem. Namely: (1) harvested produce contains within it a percentage of produce which must be removed as priestly gifts and tithes before the farmer or householder may use the produce in his own meals; (2) one may, however, consume untithed produce informally as a 'snack', but not in the course of a meal, lest the quantity of produce available for tithes be diminished; (3) once untithed produce has been brought into the home or its environs (i.e. the domestic courtyard) it is regarded, by virtue of its presence in the owner's private domain, as having been appropriated by the farmer for his own meals. Precisely as he lays personal claim to the produce, therefore, the farmer is forbidden from making any further use of it until the portions desired by God are removed and properly disposed of.<sup>24</sup>

The specific problem of M 3:8 concerns a practical conundrum which flows from the above considerations. Let us suppose that a fruit tree is growing in my courtyard. In so far as harvested produce is rendered liable to the removal of tithes upon entry into my courtyard, and I am forbidden from making any use of it at all until I remove the offerings, is it ever possible for me to grab a piece of fruit from the tree and eat it without having to remove tithes on behalf of all the fruit on the tree?

Let us see how M 3:8 works the problem out. After a brief discussion of the relevant pericope, we will move on to Y's treatment of the same issue:

- A. *A fig-tree which is standing in a courtyard—[the householder] eats [figs] one by one [from the tree] and is exempt [from tithing].*
- B. *But if he gathered [figs] together, he is required [to tithe before eating any of them].*
- C. *R. Simeon says, "[If he has] one in his right hand, and one in his left hand, and one in his mouth [he remains exempt]."*
- D. *[If] he climbed to the top [of the tree], he stuffs his pocket [with figs] and eats [without tithing].*

A—B solves the problem we have described by means of a clever fiction. The point of the contrast between 'eating one by one' (A) and 'gathering together' (B) is to remind us that only *harvested* produce becomes liable to the removal of tithes in the courtyard. Since the very meaning of 'harvest' implies a gathering of a number of individual items of produce, it is only reasonable that the householder need tithe when he gathers two or more figs into his possession from the tree. Accordingly, a person may pluck one fig and eat it, pluck another and eat *ad nauseum* without tithing, for at no point has he gathered in one batch a quantity sufficient to qualify as a 'harvest'. C provides a liberal amplification of A—B. Simeon suggests that the hands and the mouth are analogous to the vessels in which the harvester places the plucked produce. Since these organic analogies to the harvest-basket are each a separate container each containing a single fig, there has been no harvest and, obviously,



no obligation on the harvester's part to tithe. D adds yet another solution. By climbing to the top of the tree the householder is no longer in his own courtyard, and so it not required to tithe even an ample snack. The inelegant context in which the eating takes place, swaying in the air at the top of a tree, disqualifies the entire action from being regarded as a 'meal' in any meaningful sense of the term.

With the assumptions, ruling and principles of M 3:8 clearly in mind, we may now proceed to Y's discussion, which deals in sequence with M 3:8A—B, C and D. I present my translation of the text whole, after which we take up discussion of each section on its own terms.

- I. A. It is taught [in a ruling stemming from the Sages of the Mishnah]: *They give him a period sufficient for chewing [the fig] the first, second and third time [before he may pick another in tithe-free circumstances].*<sup>24a</sup>
- B. [Said] R. Yonah in the name of R. Zeira: "For if he picked the second fig within the period needed for chewing the first,<sup>25</sup> both are rendered forbidden for untithed use [since they are regarded as belonging to a single harvested batch]."
- C. R. Jeremiah suggested: "If he threw the first fig ten-handbreadths above the contained space [of the courtyard], and it had no time to descend within the ten handbreadths of the contained space before he picked another, both are rendered forbidden for untithed use [since the first fig will ultimately return to the courtyard, and so combine with the second to form a batch]."
- II. A. R. Leazar b. R. Simeon says: "[If he has] three in his right hand, and three in his left hand, and three in his mouth [he remains exempt]".
- B. Insofar as he was a glutton, R. Leazar b. R. Simeon so estimated for himself.
- C. 1. R. Leazar b. R. Simeon went to [the home of] R. Simeon b. R. Yose bar Laqonia, his father-in-law. And [R. Leazar b. R. Simeon] would mix the wine and guzzle it, [and then again] would mix the wine and guzzle it. Said to him [R. Simeon b. R. Yose bar Laqonia]: "Haven't you learned from your father [R. Simeon] how little a man must swallow from his cup [in order not to appear intemperate]?" He answered: "With unmixed wine—one gulp; when mixed with cold water—two; when mixed with hot water—three. But [in promulgating this general norm] Sages stipulated no measure for [exceptions such as] your wine, which is delightful, or for your cup, which is small, or for my belly, which is broad!"
2. Now, [because R. Leazar b. R. Simeon was suspected of informing on Jewish tax-evaders to Roman authorities] R. Joshua b. Qorha would shout at him: "Vinegar, son of Wine!" [so indicating that R. Leazar b. R. Simeon had failed to measure up to his father's exemplary reputation]. He replied: "Why do you shout so at me?" He said: "[And, indeed, so shall I continue] until you get yourself off to Laodicia!" [R. Leazar b. R. Simeon] responded: "But haven't I cut down only mowed thorns [i.e., Jews already sentenced to death]?"<sup>26</sup> He said: "Shouldn't you have gone to the ends of the Earth [so as] to



permit the Master of the Garden to cut down the thorns [in His own good time and by His own means]?"

- III. A. If a fig rolled away by itself [after the householder plucked it from the tree], what is the ruling regarding its retrieval? [That is, does it combine with a second fig plucked from the tree to create a batch?]
- B. Just as you say elsewhere [in a teaching of the Sages]: *he returns [the fig from the house] to their [original] place [in an unguarded courtyard] and eats [without tithing]* (Tosefta Maaserot 2:8)—here, too, it is the same [since in each instance the man's original intention is to eat the produce in a state of exemption, i.e., either in the unguarded courtyard or one at a time].
- C. [It is incorrect to conclude that the man at A is exempt from the obligation to tithe, for] there [at Tosefta Maaserot 2:8] the case involves one who returns produce to a place in which the law of tithes does not apply [*viz.*, the unguarded courtyard], while here [at A] the case involves one who returns produce to a place in which the law of tithes does apply [*viz.*, the guarded courtyard of M. 2:8].
- D. How, then, does one envision the context [assumed at A, such that it is plausible to permit the man to eat without tithing]? [Suppose] he was on top of the fig-tree [as at M. 3:8D, dropped the fig, retrieved it from the ground and then reascended in order to eat it with the others]?
- E. How do you rule on the matter—is it like a man standing in town [when he recalls that his workers have left a sheaf behind in his field], or is it like a man standing in the field [when he recalls the sheaf]? It is derived in accord with the following [teaching of the Sages]:
1. [*If the farmer*] was standing in town and said, "*I know that the workers have forgotten a sheaf in such and such a spot [in my field]*", and they [*indeed*] forgot it—this is not [governed by the law of] the forgotten sheaf [*and the sheaf remains the property of the farmer rather than the poor*].
  2. [*If*] he was standing in the field and said, "*I know that the workers have forgotten a sheaf in such and such a spot [in my field]*", and they [*indeed*] forgot it—lo, this is [governed by the law of] the forgotten sheaf [*and the sheaf now belongs to the poor*] (cf. Tosefta Peah 3:1).
  3. For it is written in Scripture: "[*When you cut down your harvest*] in the field, and have forgotten [a sheaf . . . you shall not go again to retrieve it (Dt. 24:19)]".

The above series of *sugyot*, which constitute a running commentary on the Mishnah, conform closely to the general literary traits of the Talmud Yerushalmi's Mishnaic exegesis as described earlier. While each of the three units of exegetical discourse can be related to some portion of the uncited pericope, there is no attempt to either make the correspondence explicit or to explain how any of the three are related to each other. There is, then, no coherent comment on the Mishnaic pericope as a whole, but rather a series of isolated observations which treat their corresponding Mishnaic *dicta* in similar isolation from the Mishnaic literary context.

On the surface, nevertheless, the contribution of each discussion to its selected portion of M 3:8 is clear. Unit I, the most straightforward of Y's



contributions, refines the nature of M 3:8A–B's notion of 'gathering' so as to indicate the precise limitations of the householder's eating privileges. The main exegetical contribution of unit II (A+B) qualifies the stipulation of M 3:8C regarding the number of figs which may be placed in certain bodily 'containers'. By far the most complex discussion is at unit III, which addresses itself to the problem of the man eating his figs in the tree (M 3:8D). A variety of rulings ascribed to the Sages of the Mishnah (III.B, E) are cited as possible principles by which to determine the precise nature of the householder's obligation to tithe.

These preliminary observations have established the basic strategy by which the Yerushalmi begins its exegetical totalization of the Mishnah. On the one hand, it *submits* to the authority of the Mishnah, depending upon the Mishnah's text for its own initial agendum as well as for the basic intelligibility of its exegetical materials. On the other hand, the Mishnah nowhere speaks on its own behalf, but is initially considered only within the context established by the *sugyot* redacted with it. The *sugyot*, that is to say, *replace* the Mishnah itself as the primary focus of interpretation. In order to see how this method of commentary is also a means of extending the canonical authority of the Mishnah to the Yerushalmi's own discourse, it will now be necessary to venture an in-depth discussion of the Yerushalmi's materials.

We begin with unit I, clearly the simplest of the three. Its task is to interpret the Mishnah's basic notion of 'gathering'. A opens the discussion of M 3:8A–B with a supplementary Tannaitic ruling, presumably of comparable authority, which instructs us in applying the Mishnah's conception. B and C, attributed to post-Mishnaic (i.e. 'Amoraic') Masters, in turn gloss (B) and supplement (C) the materials of the Tannaitic stratum. The discussion as a whole, then, takes the reader from the Mishnah's simple assumption that we know what 'gathering' means to C's remarkable judgement that a 'gathering' exists even when part of what is gathered is not in the gatherer's possession. This unexpected, if acute, turn of exegesis should not obscure an even more basic twist of the Talmud's discussion. The editor, first of all, links the Mishnah to an equally ancient ruling beyond the boundaries of the Mishnah's own documentary limits (A). Then he expands the latter's basic program through citations of Amoraic, rather than Tannaitic, authorities. What has happened is that the Mishnah's meaning is made contingent upon a second text of Oral Torah (A), which in turn defines the context of subsequent exegetical remarks. The Talmud's exegesis, then, is *not of the Mishnah, but of its own juxtaposition of the Mishnah with the tradition cited at I. A.*

This rather subtle displacement of exegetical focus from the Mishnah to non-Mishnaic materials is more boldly pursued in unit II, a composite of three distinct sub-units (A, B and C), the latter two functioning as commentaries upon their predecessors. Presupposed at A is Simeon's ruling at M 3:8C.



Here Simeon's son, Leazar, rejects not only his father's tradition, but seems indeed to reject the entire thesis of M 3:8A-B, *viz.* that a man may have no more than one fig in his 'vessel' at any given time. B offers a reconciliation of A and M 3:8C, claiming that there is no difference in principle at all. Leazar contradicts neither his father's ruling nor the basic point of M 3:8A-B, but rather has taken into account the peculiarities of his own gluttonous proclivities. Thus far, the *sugya's* discussion of M 3:8 is complete. C.1 and 2, which constitute the bulk of the *sugya*, now pursue matters of no interest to the Mishnah, but quite relevant to B. The stories about Leazar are clearly independent of each other and are perfectly intelligible outside their present context. That is, they are formulated in some context other than the needs of a commentary on M 3:8. Nevertheless, they are pressed into service by the redactor in order to explain B's reference to Leazar's gluttony.

We may step back from the details of the *sugya* at this point and ask a simple question: in what way does it constitute an exegesis of M 3:8C? The answer is equally simple: if by exegesis we mean a careful explication of the principles informing Simeon's definition of 'gathering' at M 3:8C, unit II is not an exegesis of Mishnah at all. Rather, Leazar's dispute with his father is the occasion for making two related affirmations: (1) a post-Mishnaic authority's dispute with a Mishnaic authority is an indication not of principled opposition, but of personal deviance (B), and (2) the consequence of deviance in small matters such as gluttony (C.1) is deviance in great matters concerning one's relation to the community of Israel and its God (C.2). Leazar's dispute with his father, therefore, inspires a homily upon the ends to which breach of discipline may lead even a member of Rabbinic group: gluttony is the first small step in a long road leading, ultimately, to treason and exile from the community. The Talmud's 'exegesis' of the Mishnah-fragment, in fact, is a series of discrete exegeses of its own constituent materials, A providing the occasion for B, C.1 exemplifying B, and C.2 drawing out the conclusions of C.1. The whole is given the appearance of a cogent, unified discussion by the skill of the redactor, whose sole personal contribution to the unit seems to appear at B, the critical observation which links A's gloss of M 3:8C to the separate stories of C.

Unit II has lead its reader into a range of concerns which could never have been anticipated on the basis of M 3:8 alone. Rather, where the *sugya* has an interest in the Mishnah at all, it seems concerned only to reconcile the Mishnah with a text outside its own boundaries, the disputing tradition of Y 3:8, II.A. As we turn now to unit III, which superficially presents a far more sustained exploration of M 3:8D, it should become clear that even here the Yerushalmi has little genuine interest in the Mishnah on its own terms. As before, our *sugya* is primarily an exegesis of its own materials rather than those of the Mishnah, for A-C clearly serves as the datum upon which D-E builds



its own problem. In what follows, I point out that this preoccupation with self-exegesis not only characterizes unit III's larger sub-units (A-C and D-E), but explains as well the relations of the constituents of these sub-units with each other.

We begin with A-C, which opens (A) with an appropriate problem generated by the notion that one may pluck and eat one fig at a time from the tree in his courtyard. If I pluck a fig, in the context suggested by the Mishnah, but it rolls away from me, may I pluck and eat a second fig prior to retrieving the first? That is, does the fig in my hand combine with the fig on the ground to form a batch? Clearly, the problem is analogous to that of Y 3:8, I.C., *viz.* can I be in possession of something not in my grasp? If so, this can only be because the courtyard is my domain, such that whatever is in it is mine whether or not it is specifically within my reach.

B's answer ignores whatever information Mishnah Maaserot might provide for answering this question (cf. M 3:5-6). Rather, it brings to A data from an entirely separate case now preserved in the Tosefta, commonly regarded as a deposit of supplementary teachings bearing the authority of the Mishnaic Sages. In its own context, the Tosefta rules that if a man unintentionally brings figs into his house, and so renders them liable to the removal of tithes, he may escape this obligation by removing the figs to a courtyard over which he has no personal control. The figs are no longer regarded as in his exclusive possession, and so may be consumed informally without tithing. B now asks us to apply to the problem of A the Tosefta's implication that liability to tithing may be nullified by referring to the *intentions* of the individual in question. That is, if the man *unintentionally* imposes obligations upon himself, we may release him of that obligation. Accordingly, B, the man *may* eat a second fig before retrieving the first.

C now rejects the implication of B on rather obvious grounds. The two cases, A and B, are incomparable. Accordingly, it is illegitimate to draw inferences from one to the other. C's rejection of B completes a single progression of argument which appears to apply the principle of M 3:8A-B to the particular problem represented by A. In fact, the *only* principle adduced stems *not* from the Mishnah, but from its Toseftan supplement (B). D begins a new phase of argument. It recognizes the primacy of B as a principle of interpretation, and seeks to uphold it against C's dismissal. Note, however, the line of defense. D supports B by revising entirely the context we have till now assumed constituted the presupposition for the interpretation of A. That is, we are to read A's case in reference to a man standing *not* in his courtyard but rather, as at M 3:8D, at the top of the tree overlooking his courtyard. This re-contextualization of A actually offers a case analogous to that assumed by the Tosefta at B, because the man in the tree has in fact returned his dropped fig to a domain in which the law of tithing is inoperative.



The conclusion of the discussion (E), builds upon the contribution of D, but introduces its own entirely novel problem. At issue is to define the way in which D's interpretation of A-B intersects with a set of principles designed to ensure that the poor will find in harvested fields gleanings sufficient for their own needs. While relevant to the Mishnah's general interest in agricultural law, these rulings are of course entirely unrelated to the law of tithes found in Mishnah Maaserot. In any event: the principle, exemplified at E.3, is that sheaves forgotten in the field during the harvest belong to the poor *only* if the owner himself was in the field when the sheaf was misplaced. We are asked, then, to apply this principle to the quite separate case of the man in the fig tree who has 'forgotten' his fig. Unfortunately, the Yerushalmi does not help us draw out the connections. Presumably, the answer is to be supplied by the independent judgement of the reader. For example, let us view 'the field' of E.2, a place in which a specific law is applicable, as analogous to 'the courtyard', in which the law of tithing applies. If so, 'the town' (E.1), in which the law of forgotten sheaves is inoperative, corresponds to 'the fig tree', also exempt from legal strictures. It would follow that the principle adduced at E.1 applies to D's re-reading of A: a man cannot lose the right to dispose of his own property if he finds himself beyond the specific domain—the field or the courtyard—to which the law restricting his rights specifically applies.

These last observations, of course, have brought us a great distance from any issues of conceivable interest to M 3:8 in the context of its own document. Rather, we are given guidance in performing an exercise unanticipated by the Mishnah itself, the linkage of its laws and principles to those derived from wholly independent legal contexts. We have moved from B-C's dispute—regarding the rights of A's householder—well into the intricacies of the law of the forgotten sheaf. Such a movement is possible, as we have seen, only if we agree to permit M 3:8's own conception of its problem to play no role in our deliberations. In this sense, unit III's 'close reading' of the Mishnah is no less dismissive of the text's perspectives than is unit II's homily on the gluttony of Leazar b. Simeon. In both cases the Mishnah is an opportunity to bring Y's student into intense engagement with something else—supplementary traditions of the Mishnaic Sages and the exegetical deliberations of later Rabbis which weave the perspectives of Mishnah into the new text of the *sugya*.

The character of these *sugyot*, entirely typical of the bulk of Yerushalmi Maaserot, is most suggestive evidence that the goal of our tractate can hardly be described as the explication of the Mishnah's text and ideas. Rather, *the primary function of these exegetical units is to draw attention from the Mishnaic text by requiring intense concentration upon the commentary's complex exegesis of its own elements.* The purpose of this commentary, then, is not to explain the Mishnah. Rather, it is to develop and exemplify procedures by which the Mishnah's text may ground a potentially endless series of conceptual



permutations through which the rulings of the Mishnah are correlated with all else regarded, by the creators of the commentary, as worth knowing.

Our *sugyot* are the models of these permutations. They *may*, on occasion, offer sustained and illuminating attention to the Mishnah's own interests. But their primary concern is to bring the Mishnah into engagement with problems and issues which can confront it *only* when its text is read in light of the entire corpus of the Mishnah, its contemporaneous Tannaitic traditions, and through the refracting prism of Rabbinic exegetical traditions. Thus the focus of exegesis is not the Mishnaic pericope itself, but the manner of its interaction with other units of Rabbinic tradition. It is the *sugya*, superimposed upon the Mishnaic text and defining its context of interpretation, which becomes the focus of exegetical labour. In so far, then, as particular Mishnaic rulings receive extensive discussion in Y, such comment serves to incorporate them into the structure of the *sugya*'s own discourse. Rather than a commentary on Mishnah Maaserot, that is, Y offers a disquisition on the *topic of tithing*, for which Mishnah Maaserot serves as a convenient source, but hardly an exclusive or exhaustive authority. In presenting its own discourse as a necessary object of interpretative ingenuity, Y's commentary on the Mishnah's Torah of tithing has become *part* of that Torah it claims to explain.

### CONCLUSIONS

If I have successfully brought the reader through both the details of Y's dialogue with itself and my own estimate of the methods and meaning of that dialogue, the conclusions to follow should appear relatively self-evident. As I indicated at the outset, the exegetical work of the Talmud Yerushalmi is grounded in a fundamental pretext of passivity which, I suggest, is hardly uncommon in the exegesis of sacred writings. The present discussion, in light of the dialectic of canon and exegesis identified by Smith, has tried to show that this pretext of exegetical passivity operates in the Yerushalmi in two complementary dimensions of the exegetical work.

The first dimension is uncovered in the literary construction of the exegetical text itself. If we placed the Mishnah and its commentary side by side, it becomes clear that the Mishnah is a kind of 'pre-text' for the Yerushalmi. That is, the very existence of this Talmud is *contingent* upon that of the Mishnah, a text which precedes the commentary in time and supercedes it in putative authority. Thus the literary units of the Yerushalmi's exegetical discourse find their natural patterns of redaction in sole reference to the discourse of the Mishnah, the 'pre-text', or authoritative utterance, which participates in the central event of Israel's history—the revelation of the Torah to Moses on Sinai. The Yerushalmi's text, then, serves as a kind of frame for the canonical 'pre-text', isolating it for attention in a manner consistent with the perspectives of those who construct the frame, even as the frame itself is



justified by the image it isolates for attention.

The more critical sense in which the discourse of Y is grounded in a pretext is a hermeneutical one. I have argued that the methods by which Y's editors organize the literary materials of their commentary and correlate them to selected Mishnaic dicta bespeaks an implicit judgement that the Mishnah can speak as Torah *only* through the mediation of tradition, as the present community of Rabbis defines and shapes it. The canonical text of the Mishnah, therefore, is a lattice-work around and through which are intertwined the ideas and perspectives of those who ascribe special authority to it. It is precisely in this sense that Y's passive submission to the thematic agendum of the Mishnah is a hermeneutical pretext, for this submission alone is what enables the *meaning* of the Mishnah to seem so necessarily dependent upon a discourse posterior to it in time and wholly unlike it in literary and rhetorical forms. Y's discourse, precisely because it presents itself as dependent upon the 'pre-text' of the Mishnah, is able to shift attention from the Mishnah to the new work created by the conjunction of Mishnah and *sugya*. Thus the creation of a commentary, which draws attention to the Mishnah as a canonical text, is at the same time a means of extending the charisma of the Mishnah to the very commentary through which the Mishnah gains its voice. By legitimating, through the act of interpretation, the canonical authority of the Mishnah, the Yerushalmi's editors legitimate themselves as its definitive spokesmen. The posture of submission and the denial of creativity is the means by which the authority of the Rabbinic exegete is enhanced in the widening community for which the Mishnah is becoming part of Moses' Torah.

The Rabbinic myth of Oral Torah, therefore, which receives its critical development in the Talmud Yerushalmi, is acted out in what appears to be the central preoccupation of Rabbinic literary culture—the construction of a vast exegetical literature designed to *be* Torah. Interpretation of the Mishnah is not simply a means of *learning* Oral Torah, and thereby submitting to the original revelation to Israel. It is primarily a means of *making* Oral Torah, of mediating the original revelation into the present Rabbinic community and its distinctive institution, the House of Study. Exegesis is not the manipulation of a text which *once* was heard as the revelation of God, but a participation in revelation's latter-day unfolding. The Rabbinic community's perception of itself as a passive receptor of unchanging revelation—like Moses, who simply wrote down what was suitable for writing and memorized what was suitable for oral transmission—is precisely what permits that community to transform and reshape what it receives, so that *its* understanding of Torah becomes part of that Torah which its heirs strive to understand.<sup>27</sup>



## NOTES

- 1 J. Z. Smith, 'Sacred Persistence: Toward a Redescription of Canon', in *idem.*, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago and London: 1982), pp. 36–52. The article is a reprint, with minor revisions, of a piece which first appeared in W. S. Green, ed., *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice* (Missoula: 1978). All citations are from the more recent version.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 48.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 50.
- 4 A most sensitive interpreter of this pretext of passivity in the exegesis of sacred texts has been Gershom Scholem. See in particular, 'Revelation and Tradition as Religious Categories in Judaism', in *idem.*, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (paperback Edn, New York 1971), pp. 282–303 and 'The Meaning of Torah in Jewish Mysticism, in *idem.*, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism* (paperback Edn, New York: 1969), pp. 32–86. Scholem, who meant his observations to apply primarily to Jewish mystical exegesis, indicates that the systematic misreading of canonical texts emerges in the context of legal exegesis (see, 'Revelation and Tradition', pp. 287–290). Nevertheless he offered no concrete examples of this. For some early observations on intentional misinterpretation of Scriptural law in Rabbinism, see D. Daube, 'Texts and Interpretation in Roman and Jewish Law', *Jewish Journal of Sociology* vol. 3 (1961), pp. 3–28 and *idem.*, 'Rabbinic Methods of Interpretation and Hellenistic Rhetoric', *Hebrew Union College Annual* XXII (1949), pp. 239–264. Compare Jacob Neusner's far more extensive and systematic observations in J. Neusner, *Method and Meaning in Ancient Judaism. Second Series* (Chico, CA: 1981), pp. 101–213.
- 5 For a full discussion of this term in the sociological study of religions, see P. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (paperback edn, Garden City, New York: 1969), pp. 81–101.
- 6 The extent to which the Babylonian Talmud continues or deviates from the exegetical methods of the Yerushalmi cannot be addressed until Neusner completes his introduction to the former. See now, however, his discussion of the latter in J. Neusner, *The Talmud of the Land of Israel. Vol. 35: Taxonomy* (Chicago: 1983). The present essay shares Neusner's estimate of the *types* of exegetical strategies employed in the Yerushalmi's *sugyot* (see, *Ibid.*, pp. 9–13, 90–112), but differs on the question of how they *function* in relation to the Mishnaic text. Neusner, on balance, insists that the Yerushalmi is *primarily* an effort to arrive at the most simple sense of the Mishnah (e.g. *Ibid.*, pp. 63–67), although he acknowledges that the *result* is a radically autonomous statement (*Ibid.*, pp. 107–112). My point, to the contrary, is that the Yerushalmi's many examples of 'close reading' serve the larger program of 'misreading' described in the present pages. Cf. M. Jaffee, 'The Mishnah in Rabbinic Exegesis: Observations on Tractate Maaserot of the Talmud Yerushalmi, in William Scott Green, ed., *Approaches to Ancient Judaism III* (Chico, CA: 1983), pp. 137–157.
- 7 The most thorough discussion of the problem in recent years, with an excellent bibliography, is that of P. Schäfer, 'Das "Dogma" von der Mündlichen Torah im Rabbinischen Judentum', in *idem.*, *Studien Zur Geschichte und Theologie Des Rabbinischen Judentums* (Leiden: 1978), pp. 153–197. Schäfer builds upon the critical foundations of Neusner's extensive work on the historical interpretation of Rabbinic sources and offers his own rather independent critique of some of Neusner's conclusions. While Schäfer is willing, unlike Neusner, to locate the notion of an authoritative 'oral tradition' as early as the Yavnean period (pp. 193–196), he shares with Neusner the view that the origins of a full-fledged myth of



Oral Torah can not be located until the third century at the earliest (p. 163). For the course of Neusner's own thinking on the issue, see the literature cited in Schäfer, p. 154, n. 6 and, most recently, J. Neusner, *Formative Judaism: Religious Historical and Literary Studies. Third Series. Torah, Pharisees and Rabbis* (Chico, CA: 1983), pp. 7-82 (hereafter, *Formative Judaism*). The dominant view, certainly prior to Neusner's work and perhaps even now, in many circles, is that the Rabbinic notion of Oral Torah in pretty much its present outlines emerges as early as the mid-second century BC. The most recent book-length formulation of this view is that of E. Rivkin, *A Hidden Revolution: The Pharisee's Search for the Kingdom Within* (Nashville, 1978). As this article was being prepared for publication, a most useful study appeared. See M. I. Gruber, 'The Mishnah as Oral Torah: A Reconsideration', *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, vol. XV (1984), pp. 112-122.

- 8 See the perceptive observations of Y. H. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle and London: 1982), pp. 5-26.
- 9 For a possible scenario, see D. Weiss-Halivni, 'The Reception Accorded to Rabbi Judah's Mishnah', in E. P. Sanders, *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition, Vol. II: Aspects of Judaism in the Greco-Roman Period* (Philadelphia: 1981), pp. 204-212.
- 10 Cf. the philological analyses of this term by Y. Blidstein, 'Notes on the Concept of Oral Torah' [Heb.], *Tarbiz* 42 (1973) and *idem.*, 'More on the Concept of Oral Torah' [Heb.], *Sinai* 88 (1981). Cf. y. Elbaum, 'Supplements to the Concept of Oral Torah' [Heb.], *Sinai* 87-88 (1980-81).
- 11 The most recent discussion of the character and dating of M. Aboth is that of A. Saldarini, *Scholastic Rabbinism: A Literary Study of the Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan* (Chicago: 1982), pp. 9-23.
- 12 Rivkin, *op. cit.*, p. 129 discovers the idea of Oral Torah in Mishnah Aboth by *interpolating* the term into his translation: 'Moses revealed the [written and unwritten] Torah from Sinai. . .'. This interpolation goes far beyond any evidence available in the Mishnah. As I have indicated above, the Mishnah *does* acknowledge that *some* Sages possess laws 'from Sinai' which are not in Scripture. Further, it also acknowledges the existence of non-Scriptural sources of law, such as 'halakhot' (legal directives) of unspecified antiquity (e.g. M. Ed. 1:5, M. Hag. 1:8, M. Yeb. 8:3) and 'the words of the Scribes' (e.g. M. Orl. 3:9, M. Yeb. 2:4, M. San. 11:3, M. Yad. 3:2). These are all regarded as human applications of Scriptural principles (e.g. M. Shab. 1:4), and give no indication that their formulators regarded them *or* the document in which they are contained (The Mishnah) to constitute an Oral Torah of Mosaic origin. Perhaps the most judicious discussion of these materials, certainly unaffected by polemics involving the work of Neusner and his students, may be consulted in E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ, Vol. II*, revised and edited by G. Vermes, F. Millar and M. Black (Edinburgh: 1979), pp. 339-346. Cf. Schäfer, *op. cit.*, pp. 184-188 and Gruber, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-117.
- 13 E.g., *Sifre Deuteronomy*, ch. 351 (Finkelstein, ed., p. 408, l. 15) and chapter 48 (Finkelstein, ed., p. 113, l. 8); *Sifra*, portion 'Behar', ch. 1:1; *Mekhilta d'R. Ishmael*, portion 'Yitro' 1:2 (Horovitz-Rabin, ed., pp. 196, l. 7-197, l. 2), *Ibid.*, portion 'Beshallah' 4:1 (pp. 157, l. 6-8 and 158, l. 3-4) and *Ibid.*, portion 'Beshallah' 4:2 (pp. 161, l. 11-13). I discuss the most explicit and frequently-cited passage below.
- 14 I follow the dating of M. D. Herr, 'Sifra', *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: 1972), vol. 14:1518. The closest contemporary parallel to the passage below is in *Sifre Deuteronomy*, chapter 351 (see n. 13).



- 15 J. Neusner, *A History of the Mishnaic Law of Purities, vol. VII. Sifra* (Leiden: 1975).
- 16 For similar ideas ascribed to the early Pharisees, see Josephus, *Antiquities* XIII. 297 (tr. R. Marcus, p. 377) and The Gospel of Mark 7:3. The claim in the above and similar texts that the Pharisees possessed 'traditions of the elders' which had the force of law seems here to be echoed by Sifra. Note, however, that Sifra regards these as *antithetical* to the idea of 'Oral Torah' rather than as constituents of it. Thus Sifra should chasten those scholars who would read into the accounts of Josephus and the Gospels the fully-articulated Rabbinic notion of Oral Torah. Compare the discussion of Rivkin, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-124 with that of Neusner, *From Politics to Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism*, second Edn (New York: 1979), pp. 45-80 and Schäfer, *op. cit.*, pp. 189-193. For an interpretation of Sifra, Behuqotai, quite similar to my own, see A. J. Heschel, *Theology of Ancient Judaism* [Heb.] (2 vols; London and New York: 1962-1965), vol. I, p. 6 (miscited in Gruber, *op. cit.*, p. 114, note 13).
- 17 Cf. the discussion of the parallel passages (Y. Meg. 4:1 and Y. Hag. 1:7) in J. Neusner, 'From Scroll to Symbol: The Meaning of the Word Torah', in *idem.*, *Formative Judaism*, pp. 48-51 and Schäfer, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-167.
- 18 On this point, see Y. A. Z., 41d and B. Yom. 80a. Compare with Bacher, 'Satzung vom Sinai', in *Studies in Jewish Literature in Honor of Kaufmann Kohler* (Berlin: 1913; reprint New York: 1980), pp. 66, n. 6 and 68, n. 6, as well as Heschel, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 438.
- 19 M. Jaffee, *The Talmud of the Land of Israel, vol. VII. Maaserot*, to be published by the University of Chicago Press under the editorship of J. Neusner.
- 20 For comparative perspective on Talmudic 'Buchwesen' and methods current in contemporary Roman juristic circles, see F. Schulz, *History of Roman Legal Science* (Oxford: 1946), pp. 183-186 (which discusses the Roman materials alone), S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York: 1950), pp. 98-99 and B. S. Jackson, 'On the Problem of Roman Influence on the Halakhah and Normative Self-Definition in Judaism', in E. P. Sanders, *op. cit.*, pp. 181-188.
- 21 In Jaffee, *op. cit.*, I estimate that 41% of Y's *sugyot* are originally formulated for purposes other than a commentary on the Mishnaic pericope with which they are presently redacted.
- 22 These are commonly referred to, in the Babylonian Talmud, as well as in modern research, as '*baraitot*', 'external (i.e., extra-Mishnaic) traditions'. Many of these are presently paralleled in the major collections of the so-called 'Tannaitic' literature, e.g. The Tosefta, Sifra and other midrashic works consisting entirely of materials assigned to authorities presumed active prior to the generation of Judah the Patriarch. The dating of these *baraitot* to the period of the Mishnah's formulation is highly debatable and must proceed on a case by case basis. On the general problem of making historical and literary use of this material, see B. M. Bokser, 'An Annotated Bibliographical Guide to the Study of the Palestinian Talmud', in J. Neusner, ed., *The Study of Ancient Judaism. Vol. II: The Palestinian and the Babylonian Talmud* (New York: 1981), pp. 173-178.
- 23 The translation, based upon the Leiden Manuscript (c.f. Venice, ed., 50d), is a modified version of that which will appear in Jaffee, *op. cit.* Such revisions as I have made are minor and serve the particular purposes of presentation for this article. All italicized materials represent citations of pericopae believed by Y's editors to stem from the Mishnaic period or to represent the thought of the Mishnah's authorities.
- 24 For details, see M. Jaffee, *The Mishnah's Theology of Tithing: A study of Tractate*



*Maaserot* (Chico, CA: 1981), pp. 1–13.

- 24a This passage does not appear in any extant Tannaitic collections.  
 25 Here I emend MS. Leiden which reads: *šnyyh*, 'second'. My emendation follows readings preserved in MSS. Vatican and British Museum: *r'šwnh*.  
 26 Cf. the parallel in *Pesiqta d'Rab Kahana* 11:19 (Mandelbaum, ed., p. 195, l. 5–6).  
 27 This study, in various forms, has passed before so many eyes that I am tempted to regard it as a collaborative effort. The earliest version was read as a paper, 'The Pretext of Interpretation', at the SBL section on 'Early Rabbinic Literature' (Chair, Richard S. Sarason) in Dallas, December 1983. There I benefitted most especially from the responses of Profs. Baruch M. Bokser, Shaye J. D. Cohen and John Townsend. Later versions were vastly improved by the critical comments of Prof. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz (Indiana University), Rabbi Leonard Gordon (JTSA) and my colleagues in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia, Profs. John Corrigan, Carlos M. N. Eire, Michael P. Levine, Benjamin Ray and Robert Scharlemann. Above all I am indebted to the work and example of Jacob Neusner who, in all matters of scholarship, continues to inspire me.

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## SHORT REVIEWS AND BOOK NOTES

Michael Carrithers, *The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka: an Anthropological and Historical Study*. Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1983, pp. xii + 306. Rs 145.

I am proud to begin by declaring an interest in this fine book: a slightly different version of it gained a doctorate under my supervision. But my role was purely formal: I can take no credit for the material, gathered during three years of independent fieldwork in Sri Lanka, still less from its beautiful presentation. Yes, beautiful; for not only is the prose a constant pleasure, the author's photographs and Stanley Sporny's drawings further serve to evoke the atmosphere of the Sinhalese forest hermitage. The book is a masterpiece of explanation and analysis; but what makes it a *tour de force* is that it is equally a work of empathy, which combines aesthetic with intellectual means to give us a sympathetic understanding for some of the highest attainments of a very alien cultural tradition.

The book primarily deals with a religious vanguard, a handful of Theravādin monks who within roughly the last hundred years have attempted 'in the first instance not to achieve liberation, but to revive the forest-dwelling way of life and re-establish hermitages, whence liberation could be sought' (p. 4). (The careful pragmatism of this quotation typifies both the subjects of the book and author's treatment of them.) Most of the monks are, of course, Sinhalese, but one chapter is devoted to a German whose Romantic quest for forest solitude (*Waldeinsamkeit*) provides a bridge to another sensibility. While the Sinhalese reformers 'present the decay of the Sangha as a result of moral turpitude', Carrithers, with the sophistication provided by the modern social sciences, argues that 'the process of decay which they criticize can be shown to be inherent in Buddhism, the unintended consequences of its constitution' (p. 139).

A Buddhist becomes a monk, as the Pali formula has it, 'for the purpose of witnessing Nirvana, the escape from all suffering' (p. 208), a goal to be achieved by mental training; yet spiritual progress will reveal that 'just as a meditator wishes himself well, so he should wish well to others' (p. 209). While in the Buddhist theory the values of wisdom (gnosis) and loving kindness (or compassion) are congruent, even mutually reinforcing, how in practice is the balance between the *via activa* and the *via contemplativa* to be struck? The tension was articulated in Ceylon in the first century B.C. when the Sangha designated two separate monastic roles. 'Insight-duty', the attainment of one's own liberation by (in the final instance) educated introspection, was given lower priority than 'book-duty', the teaching and preservation of the scriptures, in order that Buddhism as a whole should not die out and thus to serve the longer-term interests of the world at large. Every virtuous monk hopes to 'influence society by his example', to provide the light by which the world can find its way (p. 51); but the village-dwelling monks with 'book-duty', the vast majority, are far more 'actively involved with the laity as society's 'literate ceremonial specialists' (p. 173). The problem is that this involvement leads to their 'domestication', to sharing lay values and to gradual disregard for the *vinaya*, the rules of their Order; and since the Sangha is embedded in the wider Sinhalese society this is 'an equilibrium state toward which the



Sangha constantly tends' (p. 141). Carrithers stresses that the reformers are in the first instance and predominantly concerned with *conduct*; in their (traditional and orthodox) view, perfect conduct is a pre-requisite for meditation. So far from monks being drawn to the forest by their experience of meditation, as he had at first hypothesized, it is moral conduct which 'is the basic emotional referent of the forest life' (p. 20).

Carrithers had formed this hypothesis because of his (culturally) Christian background: Protestants 'prescribe a radical conversion experience as a basis of Church membership' (p. 18). The same Protestant background had given him, a layman, experience of meditation. But 'the rigid separation of monk from layman is a bedrock on which the edifice of Theravāda spiritual life is founded. At best, it results in an exalted professionalism; at worst, in obscurantism' (p. 281). Similarly, 'the gentle courage of renunciation, the highest possible virtue' (p. 15), derives its emotional charge from the very dearness of peasant family life (pp. 92-94), in such a way that there is an absolute division of labour between lovers and leavers.

What animates the leavers? 'I found, on the one hand, that their standard and orthodox answer was that they left the world because of disillusionment . . . But what was in a sense too important or obvious for comment, or even for easy comprehension, was the single theme which wove together the positive motives: the traditionally transmitted aspiration to the estate of the venerable forest dweller' (p. 15).

To delineate this aspiration, and thus to portray Theravādin spirituality, Carrithers has written brief biographies of eight monks, for he finds biography 'the most effective method of elucidating motives in social and cultural history' (p. 4). Into these biographies he has woven information about the scriptures and historical events which inspired the monks. These monks achieved very different results, for they 'set out to achieve quite different aims. The ideal was itself complex, composed of different and to an extent contradictory models which had been laid one on top of the other in the course of Buddhism's history' (pp. 7-8). Their charter was ambiguous, 'a body of legend and rule whose own history must be explained before it is used to explain present events' (p. 8). Much as their lives overlapped in time and sometimes impinged on each other, the values and ambitions of these monks form a spectrum. And this spectrum in turn 'is an intellectual and cultural heritage within which questions of profound import have been asked and answered, new problems posed, and the form of further solutions determined' (p. 13).

The book contributes to several disciplines. I have quoted enough to show how imbued it is with Popperian method; in fact the Introduction proceeds by refuting successive working hypotheses about the monks' motivation. Sociological issues are prominent here and elsewhere; for instance, chapter 12 is mainly devoted to the problem of how authority, whether formal or informal, operates in an organization founded to institutionalize self-reliance. Traditional orientalists too will learn from the many acute discussions of the *vinaya*. (Here, however, I have found one mistake: by confusing *ñ* with *n*, Carrithers has read a negative into the Pali where none exists, so that the middle paragraph of p. 63 should be deleted. Luckily the argument is not further affected.)

The hermitage movements are treated in chronological order, as the historian might expect. But the book's organization is so ingenious that the religious theme too progresses with a compelling coherence from periphery to core. Successive chapters deal with values, concepts and events relatively marginal to the attainment of Nirvana, till the last three chapters bring us to the heart of Buddhist soteriology, and end on the high note of a monk who seems to have achieved in his own person all that the Theravādin tradition offers and demands.



He has 'a deeply cultivated sense of what it is in his power to accomplish and what it is not. Temporarily and provisionally it is possible and necessary to allay much suffering; but permanent and really effective alleviation is possible for each individual only in himself, and even there the underlying processes, of change and decay, go on unchecked' (p. 292).

So much I can convey in summary. But to understand the conclusion that 'the monk's way of life is more than merely a means to an end; it is very nearly the end in itself' (p. 281), I can offer no short cut; one must read the whole book. This is a remarkable contribution to the phenomenology of religion and deserves to be read by everyone interested in the religious range of mankind.

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Philippe Besnard (Editor), *The Sociological Domain: The Durkheimians and the Founding of French Sociology*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. xii + 296. \$44.50.

The publication of *The Sociological Domain* gives us a timely occasion to recall the debts religious studies owes the Durkheimians. Edited ably by Philippe Besnard of the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme in Paris, this collection of twelve essays offers a welcome and useful sampling of some of the most recent work of a growing association of scholars more or less loosely affiliated with the *Groupe d'études Durkheimiennes*. Their interests focus primarily on writing histories of the remarkable 'team' Durkheim built round himself and the *Année Sociologique* roughly from 1896. Five essays were especially prepared for this volume on topics like Durkheim and 'academe', sociology and folklore, political sociology, and particular members of the 'team', Celestin Bouglé and François Simiano. Six chapters appear here in revised versions of their original form as articles originally published in French in a special number devoted to the Durkheimians in the *Revue française de sociologie*, volume 20, number 1, 1979: a survey of the 'team' itself, republican ideology and the study of society, sociology in the schools, sociology of law and education as well as an intellectual portrait of Maurice Halbwachs. A final mention should also be made of the remarkable intellectual sketch here Marcel Mauss drew of himself in 1930, recently discovered by Besnard and until now only available in French in number 2 of the *Revue française de sociologie*. Besnard further enriches the entire anthology with selected correspondence bearing on the creation of the *Année* and the 'Lapie affair'.

Although this volume may seem an abundant vintage of sociology, how much of its 'wine' should lodge in the cellars of religious studies? Why and how do the Durkheimians matter to the study of religion?

From a theoretical viewpoint, the Durkheimians make at least two significant contributions to the study of religion. First, it is worth observing that for Durkheim, Hubert and Mauss, the nucleus of the 'team', religion was a fundamental concern. Indeed, the sociology of religion, says Besnard, 'can be considered the keystone of Durkheimian sociology,' (5)—and not the other way round, as many theologically-minded critics of Durkheimian religious studies presume. Religion may be essentially social for the Durkheimians; but society is just as essentially religious for them as well. This led to studies of the religious domain which still command respect and interest, in some cases almost a century later. Here I especially cite Humbert and Mauss's



monographs on magic and sacrifice, Hubert's study of sacred time, and Mauss's pieces on gift and prayer. If we look beyond the nucleus, the names of Célestin Bouglé, Marcel Granet, Marcel Griaule, Maurice Leenhardt, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Gaston Richard, to name only a short list, come into view.

What is more, a real tradition exists and real historical continuity with this work in religious studies can be traced with the work of heirs to the tradition like Louis Dumont, Mary Douglas, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Robert Bellah, Talcott Parsons, Claude Lévi-Strauss, or Georges Dumezil. This lively and vigorous tradition of the study of religion stands on its own feet, and is not to be dismissed as 'sociologistic' because of its sociological perspective. Indeed, if one might speculate on the basis of recent work in the history and phenomenology of religions, like Ninian Smart's *Worldviews*, a major convergence of research projects may be under way. Smart's work on worldview analysis bears strong similarities to Louis Dumont's recent analyses of modern ideologies, to mention just one point of common concern. Students of religion have every right to claim the Durkheimian legacy of research as their own, since it puts religion, ideology and worldview at the center.

A second theoretical gift of the Durkheimians is their habit of scrutinizing fundamental concepts like gift, magic, prayer, sacrifice and so on, within the larger framework of establishing effective taxonomies of the religious field. In a way, this encompasses and extends the career of the phenomenology of religions as, for instance, practised by the Dutch school. Aside from the illustrious monographs of Hubert and Mauss, both in collaboration and as individuals, a number of interesting conceptual discussions exist today only in French versions and then in obscure locations. These include Mauss's piece on prayer, person, and (with Hubert) myth. For his own surprisingly substantial part, the relatively unknown Hubert produced conceptual works on the notion of sacred time, hero cults, and a veritable manifesto of the Durkheimian scheme for the study of religion in the form of a monograph-length introduction to the French translation of Chantepie de la Saussaye's *Manual of the History of Religions*, which he directed in 1904. Much of the same flair for conceptual criticism and reformation characterizes Dumont's studies of caste and individualism or Lévi-Strauss's book on totemism.

Students of religion also have lessons to learn from the style of conception of this volume as much as from its theoretical substance. Where is the critical historical work by students of religion on pioneers of the phenomenology or history of religions? Models of what such articles might be in the *Sociological Domain* are François Isambert's essay on Hubert, Czarnowski and Hertz as founders of the sociology of folk religion, Paul Vogt's piece on Bouglé or Philippe Besnard's contribution on François Simiand. Perhaps the coming years will find similarly conceived work by historians of religions on some of the same members of the Durkheimian circle related here or critical histories of the life and work of Otto, Max Müller, van der Leeuw, Max Weber and others. Once can at least hope that this will be so. At the very least, the special experience students of religion bring to these subjects would help round out the picture passed on to us today by scholars primarily allied with sociology or history.

If students of religion were to embark on such critical intellectual histories, they might be well advised to cultivate *institutional* intellectual history as assiduously as some of the contributors to this volume. The essays by Victor Karady on the Durkheimians in the university and by George Weisz on the influence of republican political ideology upon the formation of Durkheimian social science are models. In today's world of retrenchment and retreat in the academic world, institutional



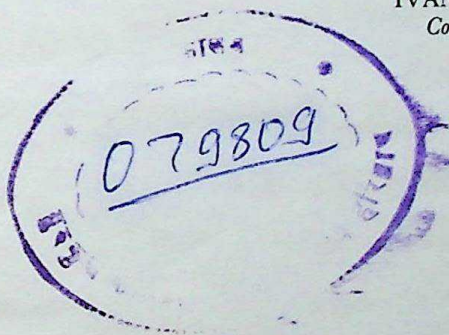
constraints and supports are understood existentially. What better answer to some of this existential anxiety than to make it an opportunity for understanding the way institutions have shaped the study of religion?

For the Durkheimians, the institution known as the 'team' was decisive to their success. Their deliberate and extended practice of doing collaborative work guaranteed that the whole of their efforts exceeded the numerical sum of its parts. When one considers the relative insignificance of their numbers in French academic institutions of the time, the impression they were able to create (and achieve) on the national and international scenes is truly a remarkable comment on the power of intellectual collaboration in the humanities. Is there a moral here for religious studies with its permanent minority status doubtless assured for the foreseeable future? One is tempted to think so. In any event, even if concerted collective effort within religious studies were to have no marked effect on the impact the study of religion might make in the academy and the world at large, it might at least make intellectual life for those involved richer and more rewarding than what has passed as intellectual life before: the lonely, romantic ideal of the virtuoso intellectual. In this light, no one better catches the spirit of Durkheimian collective scholarship than Marcel Mauss in his intellectual self-portrait (p.139).

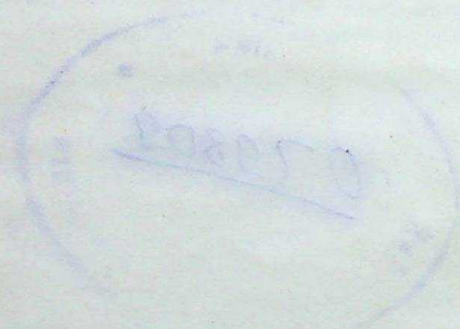
I cannot divorce myself from the work of a school. If there is any individuality, it is immersed within voluntary anonymity. Perhaps what characterises my scientific career . . . is the feeling of working together as a team, and the conviction that collaborating with others is a drive against isolation and the pretentious search for originality.

Thus, the Durkheimians have much to offer the student of religion—everything from a program of study and real accomplishment in religious studies to a morality of scholarly work. *The Sociological Domain* is a fine place to begin understanding the Durkheimian tradition of the study of religion.

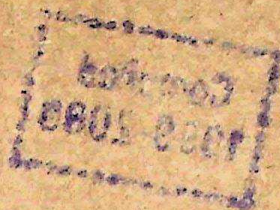
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